Unlatching the gate: realising my scholarship of living inquiry

Mead, Geoffrey Douglas

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Realising my scholarship of living inquiry

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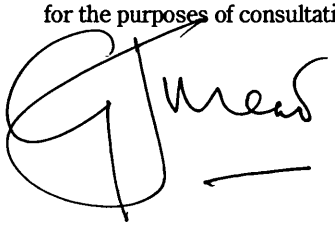

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Ignore the outward form of things. Do not concern yourself with the names people give to things. The form of things is a gate; the name of a thing is like a title inscribed on the gate. Pass through the gate into the meaning within.

Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273)[1]

[1] *Rumi in a Nutshell*, Robert Van der Meyer, Hodder and Stoughton, 1998, p23

Acknowledgements

I would like to celebrate the completion of this thesis by acknowledging the help and support of the many people who have made it possible and, mostly, enjoyable! Let me begin by thanking Jack Whitehead, exemplary scholar, fiercely loving man and extraordinary supervisor whose evident pleasure in all our efforts and determination to meet each of us on the ground of our own being has been such an inspiration.

Thanks too, to Eden Charles, Jacqui Scholes-Rhodes and Paul Roberts, fellow travellers and members of Jack's supervision group, for support, challenge and friendship on the way. The wider CARPP community has provided the setting for this work and I am grateful to Peter Reason and Judi Marshall both for particular conversations and for their work in establishing and promoting the kind of research community of which I am proud to be a member. I also appreciate the care and thoroughness with which my examiners Professor Helen Simons and Doctor Donna Ladkin tested and extended my own understanding of the thesis.

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I am grateful too, to all those who have taken a leap of faith to join me in various educational action inquiries over the past fifteen years or so: in particular the members of the Hertfordshire Constabulary *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project who brought so much of themselves to our inquiry group and taught me so much about the pleasures and pitfalls of facilitating co-operative inquiry. The many others who have welcomed me into their company and shared their learning about menswork, loving relationships, healing journeys and about education are simply too numerous to mention but are nonetheless appreciated for their wisdom and kindness.

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For Alison, my lover and best friend for so much of the five years I have been researching and writing this thesis, I feel a deep respect and affection. Thank you for your integrity and generosity and for your unequivocal support and forbearance as I so often disappeared into the solitary processes of reading, writing and reflection.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my ex-wife Sara Mead in recognition of the twenty-five years we spent together and to our children Nicola, James, Georgina and Thomas and granddaughter Poppy who are the future we once dreamed of.

Abstract

Unlatching the gate: Realising my scholarship of living inquiry

In writing this thesis, I address the "new scholarships" identified by Ernest Boyer (1990) and Donald Schon (1995). In particular, I seek to make a contribution to an emerging "scholarship of inquiry" in which – in the spirit of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1934) - the focus is on living the questions rather than seeking answers. I do so through the self-study of four strands of my practice: as a man, in loving relationships, in search of healing and as an educator.

The thesis is both an account of my learning in these areas and an action research inquiry in its own right as, over the course of two years, I sustain a cyclical process of writing and reflection, searching for connections, contradictions and tensions between the various strands.

In its manner of presentation, the thesis responds to the "crisis of representation" identified by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) by using what Eisner (1997) calls "alternative forms of data representation". The stories of living inquiry are self-reflective narratives of lived experience including "artistically rendered forms" such as poetry, creative writing, paintings, sculpture and audio recordings, where these help to convey something of the emotional, aesthetic and spiritual qualities inherent in the inquiries.

Throughout the thesis I develop the idea of *living inquiry* – a holistic approach in which all aspects of life are potentially available as sources of learning. *Living inquiry* is a form of action research embracing first, second and third person inquiry. It consciously avoids adopting any single method, preferring Feyerabend's (1975) argument that there are no general solutions and that the best chance of advancing knowledge comes from the intuitive use of a pluralistic methodology

Agreeing with Lyotard (1984) that "the [postmodern] artist and the writer... are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been* done", I realise *my scholarship of living inquiry* by reviewing the text to identify twelve

distinctive ontological and epistemological standards of judgement and criteria of validity and by showing how they are both embodied in, and emerge from, my practice.

As the thesis draws to a close, eschewing the notion of a generalisable theory in favour of one that is situated and particular, I also identify six underlying principles that inform my continuing life of inquiry:

- trusting the primacy of my own lived experience as the bedrock of inquiry, whilst remaining open to the world of ideas and to what others have to offer

- valuing the originality of mind and critical judgement inherent in my own forms of sense-making and knowledge creation and the wide variety of forms of representation that they generate

- exercising my *will to meaning* to move me towards what brings a sense of significance and purpose to my life and to clarify my vocation as a healer and educator

- making an existential choice of optimism, of doing my best, of striving to make things better or to make the best of any given situation – for myself and with others

- refusing to subsume my life of inquiry within any prescribed form, "following my bliss" to find my own path as a unique and eccentric human being

- communicating and accounting to others for my life of inquiry as an individual claiming originality and exercising my judgement responsibly with universal intent.

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Prelude

Go I know not whither, bring back I know not what

Origins

9th December 2001

If the *Abstract* (which you may have just read) can be said to represent the pinnacle of the thesis in terms of my current understanding of its nature and achievement, then I ask you now to return with me to the foothills of the *Prelude* where, nearly two years ago – after many years of living my life as inquiry – I contemplated the prospect of writing a PhD thesis. Writing the *Prelude* was an essential precursor to setting out on that demanding journey. Reading it will give you some idea of the ground from which I write and, I hope, whet your appetite for what follows.

Why write a PhD thesis?

31st January 2000

Why would I write a PhD thesis? Not for the same reason that I inquire. I live my life as inquiry because I must. Writing a PhD is an opportunity to affirm the value of a single life, to claim the right to take myself (my-self) seriously and to support and encourage others to do likewise. It is a tremendous act of self-affirmation. I am honouring myself by claiming the authorship of my own narrative/stories.

Pattie Lather (Lather 1994) speaks of "victory narratives" – implying progression, movement towards a destination. But glimpses of transcendent unity which swim and recede before our eyes in the midst of our struggles to live a good life do not represent such "victories". Rather, they are simply what give us hope to go on.

Sometimes, I experience such moments through storytelling – through what arises between teller and listener as the tales (particularly wonder tales and sacred stories) fire our imaginations and stir our souls. In those moments we are changed in some subtle, yet powerful, way. We have opened the gate and stepped through for an instant beyond everyday dualities into our own Buddha-nature. Again, as an

educator/consultant there are times when something arises between me and other in that liminal space that is (in the European tradition) the domain of Hermes. It is such fleeting moments of magic and possibility that fascinate me.

I want my inquiries to spring out of the necessities of my life, to be real and meaningful to me and others, not mere instrumental means of "capturing data" which can be written up for a PhD. Joseph Campbell (Cousineau 1999) encouraged us to "follow your bliss" and that is what (at its best) this work represents – my stumbling attempts to walk my own path.

It is the act of engaging in inquiry that makes the real difference – though it is also good to celebrate moments of discovery and learning. It follows that, to be congruent, my thesis will be fragmented rather than coherent, unfinished rather than complete, flawed rather than perfect, episodic rather than comprehensive, plural rather than singular, and swirling rather than linear. It will not be fully articulated because I do not understand everything.

It will also incorporate the media I actually use to explore and to express myself – i.e. stories, poems, pictures, sculpture, audio, even video – as well as more conventional text. I am not interested in challenging the boundaries of academic representation for the sake of it, only in so far as it serves my need to engage the reader (listener, viewer) authentically with the research "that is my life".

Feeling Stuck

5th April 2000

Back at my dining room table again, tense, nervous, agitated, a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, ache in my jaws, tremor in my hands, holding the pen too tight, breathing unevenly... fear. I have been avoiding... now my hand stops... physically avoiding starting to write my thesis. I have done plenty of other writing, read half a dozen books, made notes... but I have been avoiding the big issue – to start writing for my PhD.

Why am I so scared? Well... this is the crunch. Can I really do it? Am I good enough? All the old self-esteem issues return and self-belief falters. I read others' stuff – Paul, Jacqui, Eden, Jonathon [1] – and think: "I couldn't write like that... so self-assured, erudite, penetrating." How can I possibly do justice to the stories I want to tell of my own living inquiry? Do I really want to put my life on the page to be pored over, critiqued and criticised, judged as worthy or not worthy for a PhD? How can I hold both the drive to express my creative intuition and the need for conscious structure? Will a form emerge from the writing itself that can contain and express the nuances, complexity and depth of what is within me?

Why should I (or you) expect a seamless, brilliant whole rather than the more fragmented, scattered original? That is where the real inquiry lies – the real time, real life inquiry... the "improvisatory self-realisation" (Winter 1998)...the "living contradiction" (Whitehead 1993)... the authentic struggle. In bringing these ingredients together, I do have to decide what to include and what to leave out and how to mix and blend them – but I do not have to adhere to a given recipe. I can follow the pattern and flow of the writing process and allow the emerging form to guide me.

I want to find that place of "simplicity beyond complexity" that Oliver Wendell Holmes speaks about [2] or, as Labouvie-Vief (Labouvie-Vief 1994) puts it, of "emancipated innocence." I want to write a "healing fiction" (Hillman 1983) not a false one. I want to write to honour the journey of inquiry rather than striving for the destination of a PhD. I want to let go of too much expectation, to allow the writing to be a pleasure, not a chore. I want to be as fully present as I can be when I write, to speak my truth and my doubt as clearly as I can, to listen to my own responses and those of others and to stay open to outcome until it emerges naturally rather than force a conclusion.

[1] Colleagues at the Centre for Action Research into Professional Practice (CARPP)
[2] Scott Peck attributes the following remark to Holmes: "I don't give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would die for the simplicity on the other side" Peck, S. (1997). The Road Less Travelled and Beyond. Sidney, London, Rider Press. p244

Invoking the sacred

13th May 2000

Thus far, my attention has generally been fragmented among the many. I have written sporadically about events, issues and ideas at the forefront of my mind (in Gestalt terms, figural). Now, I am also beginning to get the feel for the one. For the stories to emerge as relevant and interesting, I have to write with a view to the whole (in Gestalt terms, the ground). This, I think, will demand working in a "third space", a place of coming together, of dialogue between disparate elements, of seeking to find the patterns that form as the parts coalesce and of seeking to exemplify and test generalisations with particular and concrete experiences.

Although, of course, I am writing to satisfy the requirements of the PhD examiners, at another, deeper level I am writing for myself. In the spirit of my friend Richard Olivier's remark to me that a PhD is a "westernised, sanctified initiation", writing the thesis is an opportunity to discover the project of the rest of my life. I can both articulate and affirm what I have learnt over the past 5 to 10 years and learn afresh from the process of writing itself.

To that end I have been thinking about the elements of a ritual to initiate the process. Going to Osel Ling[3] does not seem so important. Ritual depends more on intentions and commitment than it does on place. On Tuesday, I sketched a pile of stones (for Hermes), a candle (for light and clarity), some flowers (for growth and creativity) and a mirror (for objectivity and reflection). Whether here in Spain or back at Bramshill, I will find an opportunity to invoke the spirit and energy of Hermes - God of magic, guide of souls, creator and transgressor of boundaries, creative essence, and dweller in liminal spaces - always at the edge.

> In Hermes we have a figure who signifies a union between an innate tendency on the part of the psyche to create boundaries and define spaces, to etch lines in the panes of perception (an archetypal process), and the instinct of creativity. It is this particular combination of archetype and instinct that makes Hermes so interesting psychologically. He signifies the creative instinct at work in the psyche in a particular

[3] A Tibetan Buddhist retreat centre near Cortijo Romero, Southern Spain

> way. A specific type of creator God, he is the creator of new spaces. It is in the creation of new spaces, novel spaces, inventive spaces, and especially psychologically subtle spaces that Hermes shows his special nature and genius. Trickster and magician are suitable epithets, for often these are secret places of subtle interiority. (Stein 1983)

I intend to make a small shrine at home using these objects (stones, candle, flowers, and mirror) before which to seek blessing for my writing, since I write for a sacred purpose. I have become clearer about the purpose of my writing but still ask "For whom apart from me?" It will help me, I am sure, to have a strong sense of audience. I can write for Jack Whitehead[4] and, to a lesser extent, for the other members of the supervision group - but that is not enough. Maybe I should ask the question closer to the point of writing - it seems to make little sense now in the abstract. Richard also asked me what gift (sacrifice?) I would make at my ritual, and I'm still wondering. It needs to be more than a trivial offering. Perhaps I should give up something that gets in the way of my writing (alcohol, for example). As I think of it, being celibate feels right. My libido or creative energy can then be concentrated on the writing. A combination of celibacy and a relative abstinence from alcohol would be a fitting personal sacrifice. As a gift I could make a practical donation to some suitable cause.

A ritual to seek blessing for my work
18th May 2000

This morning I walked up into the hills north of Cortijo Romero as far as I could go. The track ran out after climbing for about three-quarters of an hour and I went on past a small square dwelling, over a rill and up into some olive trees on the other side. They were unkempt, terraces crumbling. The ground underfoot was covered with a shaggy matting of grasses and wild flowers half way to my knee.

At the highest point of the olive grove was a flat-topped boulder and there I stopped. I gathered some small stones (flattish, palm-sized) and heaped them into a cairn on top of the boulder – a shrine to Hermes. Acknowledging the friendly spirits who dwell in this place – may they remain undisturbed – I invoke the god himself. My purpose is

[4] My supervisor at CARPP, University of Bath

to seek his blessing and assistance as I write my PhD thesis. Pouring a libation of fresh sweet water over the stones, I say a prayer, out loud:

> Open me, let me be a channel so that the one and the many are brought together in my work. Help me write in the spirit of learning and help me make a difference in the world. Help me to improve my practice as an educator, to live well as a man, to enter more fully into loving relationships, and to find healing for body and soul.

A large, delicately patterned cream and brown butterfly swirls round my head and I follow it to a bare rampart of earth where I watch it settle on the bright, blue blossom and then flit to a similar plant, dusting it with pollen. I pause, fascinated by the beauty and symbolism of its behaviour. Psyche is the Greek word for both butterfly and soul. I see the butterfly pollinating plants and my intuition tells me to receive this as the answer to my prayer. By letting my imagination free, I will make the "right" connections, ideas will be fertilised and new understandings will grow.

Simple, undramatic and beautiful. The magic is always there, waiting for an open heart and discerning mind. I offer silent thanks to the god and continue down the mountain to Cortijo Romero, filled with enthusiasm, anticipation and quiet confidence in the way ahead.

Making a start
24th May 2000

The immediate problem is not "Where to begin? but "How to start?" At this point I cannot possibly know where to begin. How do I know what kind of acorn/egg I need until I know what kind of oak/chicken it grows into? I recall Jack Whitehead telling me that the opening section of a thesis probably needs to be written last. By that time, hopefully, the text will reveal the questions it is (implicitly) seeking to answer. I rather like this teleological view of the creative process. As TS Eliot famously said in *The Four Quartets* (Eliot 1944):

> What we call the beginning is often the end
> And to make an end is to make a beginning.
> The end is where we start from...

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Or, as Edward Said says more prosaically in his book *Beginnings* (Said 1985), beginning is essentially an act of returning, of going back and not just a departure point for linear progress.

So, this is not the beginning. That will come later. It is however where I have chosen to start writing my PhD thesis. I have written tens of thousands of words during the past three years but I now I face a different kind of challenge – to produce a convincing account of my research, something substantial that meets the criteria of originality of mind and critical judgement. I want to do this as creatively as I can but I do need some clear intentions and loose frameworks by which to navigate as I set sail on a sea of stories, an ocean of notions as Salman Rushdie puts it in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (Rushdie 1991). Albeit I will almost certainly drift, run aground, tack before the wind and decide to change course several times to explore new lands or merely to keep afloat. To stretch the metaphor a little further I shall try to avoid treating my present intentions as fixed stars and my frameworks as admiralty charts. As someone embarking on a voyage of exploration, I will have to find my own landmarks.

As I contemplate the journey ahead, three questions come to mind. What inquiries do I want to write about? How do I want to write about them? and (the question upon which my answers to the first two seem to depend) What sort of inquirer am I? From a consideration of these questions I hope to articulate some provisional intentions and frameworks. I shall then attempt to produce a concise description (title, themes, methods) of my intended thesis – which I expect to revise, possibly frequently. It may be that none of these words end up in my actual submission. As long as they serve the immediate purpose of getting started, I do not mind.

What sort of inquirer am I?

The first and most obvious response is that I am a mid-life inquirer – a fifty-year old man. The tasks and quests of mid-life are very different from those of my earlier years. As a young man I knew (or thought I knew) what I had to do. Get married, have children, get promoted. For the most part, other people told me what they wanted from me and I did my best to satisfy them – the classic "hero quests" of so many myths and fairy tales. Bring back the stag with the golden horns, win the hand of the princess in marriage, succeed to the throne, live happily ever after. But, somewhere between 35 and 50, I discovered that there is life beyond "happy ever after" and, in my case, it was not happy.

It seems that there are fewer rules and rubrics for the quests of mid-life. Indeed, finding one's own path seems to be of their very essence. This dilemma is wonderfully portrayed in the quest undertaken by Fedot in the traditional Russian folk tale *Go I know not whither, bring back I know not what.*[5] To accomplish his quest, he must go to the ends of the earth. To guide him on the first part of his journey he is given a golden ball which rolls before him and which he must follow. The image of the golden ball fascinates me. What could it represent for me as a mid-life inquirer searching I know not whither for I know not what? Perhaps it stands for those core values which drive us and against which we validate our practice. In my case, the values that I know have most influenced me in recent years are those of authenticity, integrity and (latterly) joy. Seeking to live these values in all aspects of my life has both lead me into tribulations and through them to greater fulfilment.

Later in the story, Fedot is aided by an old frog who guides him to a mountain ringed by fire where he finds a tricksterish spirit, Schmat Razum who becomes his companion and helper as he returns to his own land to begin the next phase of his life. The frog, of course, is a creature of both the water and the land. As such, we might say that she (for the frog is female in the story) brings together the elements of mythos (water – territory of the soul and the unconscious) and logos (land – territory of the active principle and the conscious mind). This may be where my story

[5] As retold by Chinen, A. B. (1993). Beyond the Hero. New York, Tarcher Putnam.

intersects with Fedot's. In writing this thesis, I am seeking to bring mythos and logos together, to work in that creative, playful (and deadly serious) "third space" where they overlap. There I hope to find my Schmat Razum and to discover the next phase of my life's work.

As an inquirer, also, I am intuitive – catching sight of possibilities out of the corner of my eye and trusting the unconscious wisdom of my peripheral vision. So my inquiries have taken many twists and turns. Events and experiences that originally seemed completely unconnected, later (sometimes much later) begin to inform each other – the kaleidoscopic fragments turning in the light and hinting at deeper patterns of meaning.

My inquiries, too, tend to be committed, passionate and deeply experiential. If, for example, I want to understand more about the power of stories to create and transform meaning, then I learn and practise storytelling by attending workshops and giving public performances. With a solid experiential grounding I am ready, and better able, to understand other peoples' theories and ideas in books and articles. Although I have, occasionally, been moved to act by particular texts, for the most part my understanding comes out of action and reflection.

I am also (as will already be apparent) always conscious of myself at the centre of any inquiry. This is not to say that I do not value second-party and third-party research (Torbert 1997) or that I neglect the "we" and the "they" (Reason and Marshall 1987). Rather, it is that I begin and end with "I". Begin - in the sense that I am motivated to inquire by my own discomfort with a situation or my desire for change or improvement. End – in the sense that I seek to be congruent in my own practice with what I might hope for in others. Bringing the inner and outer worlds together in this way highlights the gaps between espoused values and actual practice – a state Jack Whitehead calls "living contradiction" (Whitehead 1993) but which I think of as living and learning "inside out".

One result of locating my "I" at the centre of my research is that I really care about my inquiries and I inquire into what I really care about. My research literally is my life. Hence few if any aspects of my life are out of bounds, though I am conscious of

having a responsibility to respect others' confidentiality and vulnerability. This is a delicate area to which I shall have to pay careful attention in making my inquiries public.

I seek to cultivate a capacity to let go of familiar patterns of understanding and behaviour. "Unlearning" and "unknowing" are, I believe, crucially important to transformative inquiry. Others have spoken of "research as ruin" (Lather 1994) and "entering the void" (MacLure 1996). I have been toying with the notion of "Eleusinian Inquiry". The polarities of Apollo (formal, rational, planned) and Dionysus (informal, intuitive, chaotic) offered by John Heron (Heron 1996) provide a useful and intriguing continuum for practising inquiry. However, looking back, as I have recently, at inquiries stretching back fifteen years in some cases, they seem to require different archetypes to describe them.

Turning once more to the Greek literature and mythology I love, I find that the pattern of the seasons embodied in the story of Demeter and Persephone and elaborated in the Eleusinian Mysteries (Otto 1955), the most sacred in the ancient world, into the eternal cycle of life – death – rebirth, is much more evocative of my inquiry process. My heuristic has frequent periods of confusion, doubt and uncertainty – even despair. I regard these not as aberrations but as places of subterranean germination and growth, which I can only enter by letting go of existing ways of being.

I am coming to realise that, though my inquiry process may not appear systematic when viewed close-up over a short period, the pattern is much more obvious over a longer time frame. The major themes are quite apparent when viewed from a distance. I contend that I am a systematic inquirer, though the rhythms are slow and the currents run deep. I am tentatively calling my approach "living inquiry" to indicate both that the process of inquiry needs to be alive and vital, and that I wish to live my whole life with an inquiring spirit. In the thesis I will extend my exploration and articulation of this "methodless" method.

Finally, in answer to this first question, I also recognise that I have been profoundly influenced as an inquirer by the five years I spent in therapy and training in Gestalt

psychology. Latterly I have found the work of Robert Bly, James Hillman and Noel Cobb and others in the field of archetypal psychology enormously powerful. I have drummed and danced and deepened my experience of ritual with Michael Meade, Malidoma Somé and Richard Olivier. I have sat at the feet of outstanding storytellers Ashley Ramsden, Sue Hollingsworth and Bernard Kelly. I have explored the mysteries of new science and complexity theory with Fritjof Capra, Ralph Stacey, Patricia Shaw and Paul Roberts. I have both participated in and contributed to a wide range of "menswork" events and activities. I imagine that all these, and maybe more, will appear from time to time in the accounts of my inquiries.

What inquiries do I want to write about?

Having sketched out how I see myself as an inquirer, I feel more confident about returning to my original question. I did as Jack Whitehead suggested and brought all my writing – papers, journals, articles – and other material – tape recordings, photographs and paintings, video – together in one place. It took me three days to produce a chronology of the major events and inquiries in my life going back to 1986. I stopped there partly because of the paucity of material but mainly because that is when I began to "wake up", began to question the order of things and to search for different and better ways to live and work.[6]

Four major themes stand out quite clearly:

- A deep exploration of my identity as a man – particularly in relationships with other men

- A struggle to find happiness and fulfilment in authentic loving relationships – with my partner and children

- A journey in search of healing – physical, emotional and spiritual

[6] See *Police Stories* in which I write about this sense of "waking up"

- A shift in my professional identity away from mainstream policing towards an educative role – in relation to leadership development in the police service

The focus and emphasis has changed over time with the ebb and flow of my energy and interest, but the themes have persisted, interweaving and overlapping. The connections between them and their mutual influence are not immediately obvious but, as I write the thesis, I hope the narratives will "speak" to each other in ways that clarify how they relate to each other.

I have paid particular attention to my work as an educator since I joined the CARPP programme in 1997, with a well-documented Action Inquiry into developing police leadership from 1998 to 2000. I am conscious that CARPP stands for the Centre for Action Research into Professional Practice and I want to locate a substantial proportion of the thesis in my professional practice. What the balance will be I do not know. I think it will have to emerge in the writing. It will depend on what stories demand to be told.

As I explicate my methodology I will, no doubt, need to justify the use of narrative forms. Suffice it to say, here, that what I am interested in is authentic stories. No story can be said to represent the absolute truth. Every story I tell, every narrative I write will be a construction. Where it is possible and seems appropriate, I will seek to include other voices and perspectives. Nevertheless I will be both author and editor of this text so I must be alive to the possibilities of omission and distortion. By authentic stories I mean much the same as Connelly and Clandinin (Connelly and Clandinin 1999) when they talk about "stories to live by". They contrast these real, unsanitised stories of teachers' actual practice with the "cover stories" they sometimes tell to protect themselves and preserve their freedom and choice in the classroom in the face of the "sacred stories" – the dictates and theories and policies that might otherwise constrain them. At their best, I believe that such stories can:

> ... honour the unrealised self by releasing the poignancy, sadness, frustration, sweetness, love, fury - everything that belongs to the confirmation of a person's existence (Polster 1987) p20

They help define our identity and find meaning in the world. Polster (ibid. p21) quotes the novelist EL Doctorow:

> People think and make judgements from the confidence of narrative; anyone at any age is able to tell the story of his or her life with authority. Everyone all the time is in the act of composition, our experience is an ongoing narrative within each of us.

Again, what these stories will be I cannot yet say. Part of the excitement and anticipation I feel about writing the thesis is my expectation that hitherto untold stories will emerge as I write.

How do I want to write about my inquiries?

The preceding paragraphs point to some of the ways I want to represent these inquiries. Stories and narrative forms will play a large part. The nature of the particular inquiries will determine the forms these will take. Some essentially self-reflective, others - such as the Action Inquiry into police leadership - more dialogic. Whatever forms the text takes, I shall strive for an open and accessible style. I dislike texts that are too dense, obliging the reader to wade through the opacity and obfuscation of unnecessary jargon. My aim is to create a thesis that is interesting and enjoyable to read. If you are finding it difficult or dull then I will have failed to express myself.

I agree with Elliot Eisner (Eisner 1993; Eisner 1997) that we face a crisis of representation as we seek to account for aesthetic and spiritual values. As my own living inquiries have touched on these issues, I have found conventional (academic) prose inadequate either to express or explore them. At such times I have spontaneously turned to other media – drawing and painting, photography, sculpture, poetry and creative "freefall" writing. I shall look for ways to include these forms of representation where they are integral to the inquiry process. However the aesthetic quality I seek is one of "simplicity beyond complexity" (Peck 1997) or "profound simplicity" (Schutz 1979) so I will forego the temptation to create an overly complex, hyperlinked, electronic text.

A second major concern is to what extent I should include existing texts, material that I have written over the past few years. "Cut and paste" is not a very satisfactory process either for creative or critical writing. For the most part, therefore, I shall treat existing papers as source material, records - which I can examine hermeneutically to build an overall picture of the inquiries. However, there are some pieces, especially creative writing, which only make sense entire, in their original form. *Police Stories* is an example of these. Describing the professional context in which I have worked for nearly thirty years, it is a backdrop to all four areas of inquiry and I am inclined to include the whole piece (See *Appendix A*).

In thinking about the actual process of writing, I am very grateful to Jack Whitehead for pointing out Seamus Heaney's (Heaney 1999) reflection on Tolkein's (1936) paper on Beowulf:

> Tolkein assumed that the poet had felt his way through the inherited material – the fabulous elements and the traditional accounts of an heroic past – and by *a combination of creative intuition and conscious structuring had arrived at a unity of effect and a balanced order.* (pxi - emphasis mine)

It seems to me that this exactly fits my desire to bring *mythos* and *logos* together, and to do so in a way that keeps the mythic element fresh and the logic clear. The process that seems to offer the best prospect of achieving this is, initially, to concentrate on writing rich and evocative representations of the inquiries themselves, to focus phenomenologically on the things themselves (Benz and Shapiro 1998). Then and only then, to subject these accounts to a more critical scrutiny, a deeper level of reflection and theorising to position the research conceptually and in relation to the literature. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive activities, but with Peter Medawar (Medawar 1968), I recognise that they are different and that each must be honoured in turn.

In an earlier passage, I invoked the spirit of Hermes to aid me and there is, indeed, before me as I write a small shrine of the sort I described. There are also two pictures, made at different times over the past ten years, which represent archetypal forms of these two energies. The Hare: *mythos*, creative inspiration, and originality of

mind. The Salmon: *logos*, conscious structuring, and critical judgement. I call upon these two old friends as I start to write my thesis.

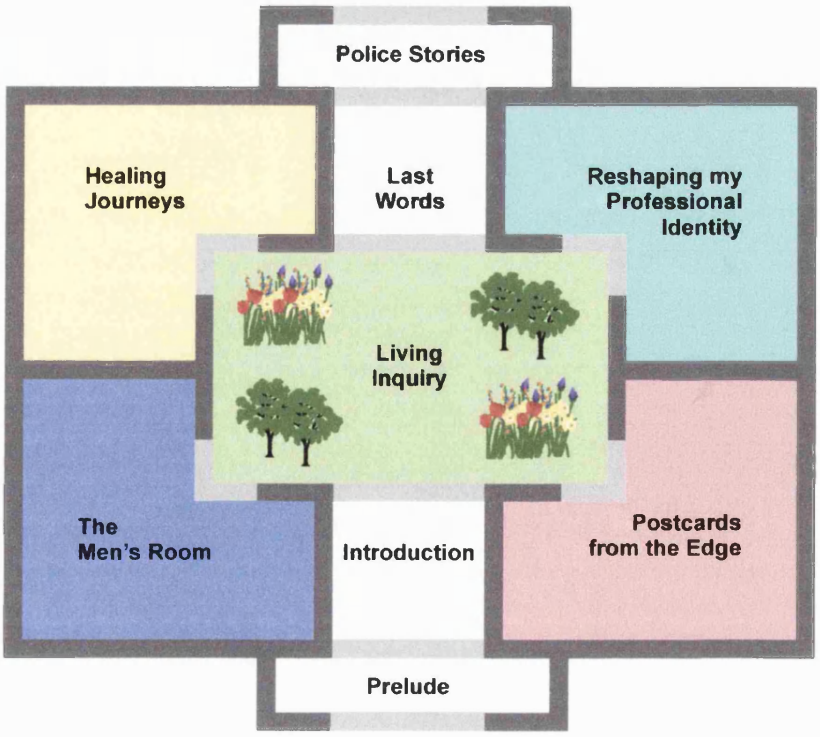
Introduction

Ending and Beginning

14th October 2001 (amended 5th May 2002)

Only now, three months after putting what I thought would be the final full stop at the end of *Last Words* has the form of the thesis I want to present emerged fully. So I have come full circle back to the beginning to suggest an appropriate perspective from which to frame it and provide some clear signposts to help you find your way around. I shall try to do so as economically as possible, without anticipating or rehearsing the detailed argument of the text itself.

Let me begin, therefore, with the guiding metaphor that occurred to me as I started writing the thesis. I visualised the thesis I wanted to write as a house with several rooms, opening onto a central atrium in the fashion of a Roman villa. They are thus separate and connected, enabling one to wander between them at will. The villa has a portico, the *Prelude*, through which you enter and another, *Police Stories* through which you leave.



The garden at the heart of the edifice represents *Living Inquiry* – my exploration of the nature of my contribution to an emerging scholarship of inquiry — and around it are arranged four rooms representing the extended inquiries into my interwoven personal and professional practice: *The Men's Room*, *Postcards from the Edge*, *Healing Journeys*, and *Reshaping my Professional Identity*. I would like you to imagine that the whole structure is translucent, enabling you to see in, out and across all the rooms from anywhere in the building. In this way too, it is permeable to the light of the world, open to its influence rather than cut-off and self-contained.

I always intended to write these narratives of my inquiries before exploring the nature of my *living inquiry* in more depth and I did not originally envisage the reflective *Interludes* interspersed between the main chapters. Staying with the metaphor, I naively thought that I could go round all the rooms before stepping in to the garden and I found (unsurprisingly in hindsight) that I was constantly drawn into the demands and delights of inquiring about inquiry.

As an aid to writing, the metaphor served me well but – like all metaphors – it has its limitations. A building, even one with a garden, is static and, in order to communicate the meanings of my thesis to you, the reader, a more dynamic form is called for. I had originally intended to present all sections of the text (with the exception of this *Introduction* and *Police Stories*) in the order in which they were written. This seemed important to maintain the integrity of my writing-as-inquiry and to expose the gradual deepening of my understanding through successive phases of writing and reflection. There is a certain logic to this approach: after all, I could not have written *Living Inquiry* without the learning and insights that resulted from writing the four narratives of inquiry represented by *The Men's Room*, *Postcards from the Edge*, *Healing Journeys*, and *Reshaping my Professional Identity*. Yet, I am also conscious that, as a reader, you may need the arguments, conclusions and theoretical groundings of *Living Inquiry* "up front" in order to engage fully with the narrative chapters.

The original form of the text was a chronological record of my writing-as-inquiry (it was never a chronological record of my life-as-inquiry). But I want it to be more than

that: as an educator, I want my text to be a pedagogical communication too. Talking about this recently with my supervisor, Jack Whitehead, it was clear that this meant that I needed to reorder the text, with *Living Inquiry* as the opening chapter. What actually arose was the idea of reflexively "folding the text back on itself" – critically commenting on each of the four narrative chapters in the light of the standards of judgement and practice emerging in the course of their creation but only articulated subsequently in *Living Inquiry.*

To achieve this Moebius-strip-like [1] form within the limitations of a printed text you will find that *Living Inquiry* features in both the opening and closing chapters of the thesis. *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* contains most of the material from the original final chapter including the distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity that I use to critically evaluate my inquiry practice in the subsequent narrative chapters. *Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise)* revisits some questions of validity, authenticity and rigour through imaginary dialogues with Peter Reason, Judi Marshall and Jack Whitehead, my tutors at CARPP. It closes with a final reflection on the whole thesis, *Last Words.*

This structure enables multiple readings of the text – learning through the writing and learning from the writing. I hope that, having read the four narrative chapters, you might want to read *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* again with a richer, deeper understanding of how it relates to the underlying and interrelated strands of inquiry.

The metaphors of the villa and the Moebius strip give some indication of the relationships between the various elements of the thesis but say little about its quality and depth or about the dynamics giving rise to its overall form and style. These too, call for some explanation.

First, and foremost, I am passionately committed to developing a holistic form of inquiry, one that takes seriously the notion that living one's life as inquiry matters and that, if that inquiry is sufficiently deep and rigorous (with its own distinctive and

[1] The Moebius strip is a three-dimensional topographical form with only one edge and one surface. It can be constructed by putting a half-twist in a strip of paper and gluing the ends together. It is then possible to trace a single line on its surface, which ends up where it started.

appropriate standards of judgement and practice and criteria of validity to substantiate claims to knowledge and meaning) it may also claim a legitimate place in the academy as a contribution to scholarship.

This commitment requires me to transcend conventional boundaries between the personal and the professional and to work with "real" issues about significant aspects of my life. Rather than restrict myself to my professional practice as an educator, I have also traced the paths of extended inquiries into my identity as a man, my conduct in loving relationships (including separation and divorce) and my long search for self-healing. To exclude any of them would be to deny a crucial aspect of my life of inquiry.

Although I touch on wider issues and connections, the text is essentially an account of my own journeys of inquiry and of how – through writing the thesis – I come to my own *scholarship of living inquiry.* Thus, I engage with a wide range of other people's ideas "authentically" as they influence my inquiries rather than conduct extensive literature reviews in particular subject areas. In taking this approach, I am consciously eschewing one of the conventional ways of demonstrating the "depth" of my research. Given the focus of my thesis on living life as inquiry, I suggest that the extent of experiential grounding, the richness of narrative and the insightfulness and candour of my writing are more appropriate indicators of quality and depth.

A *second* major influence has been my commitment to inquire through the process of writing the thesis. I want to learn, to be surprised by what I write, not merely "write down" what I already know or "write up" a collection of data. To a considerable degree, I have held true to this intention, learning much through the act of writing and through the periods of deep reflection that have accompanied it. The thesis is therefore not merely <u>about</u> action research. Rather, the thesis itself <u>enacts</u> a process of action research.

Thus, as you read the narratives of my inquiries into my practice as a man, in loving relationships, in search of healing and as an educator – presented in the same order in which they were written – I invite you to notice how I gradually come to realise my *scholarship of living inquiry* as I develop my capacity to deepen the dialogue between

the originality of my authentic inquiry process and the rigorous application of my critical judgement.

As I completed each major chapter, I naturally paused, reflecting upon what I had written and engaging with others (notably Jack Whitehead, my supervisor) in dialogue about it, feeding my emerging understanding of my ***living inquiry*** and constantly asking what overarching question the text was "seeking" to answer. To make this cyclical process quite explicit, I have dated key pieces of reflective writing such as the *Prelude* and the various *Interludes.*

Responding to Jack's questioning and to the challenges of other colleagues in the CARPP postgraduate community has powerfully stimulated my thinking and influenced the development of the thesis in recognition of which, I present some of the most significant of them in the text. These dialogues have been an integral part of my inquiry, enabling me to clarify and articulate the qualities and practices of my inquiry process, relating it to other people's ideas without subsuming its distinctive form within their conceptual frameworks.

I touch upon methodological and epistemological issues as they arise but reserve a detailed consideration of these issues for *Living Inquiry.* As I indicated earlier, writing the thesis was the process by which I learned about the purposes, scope, epistemology, validity, methodology and position of my inquiry process. I needed to write the narratives of my extended inquiries in order to understand and articulate the principles behind them. That has been a primary purpose of my research and to pretend otherwise by claiming adherence to a predefined methodology would be misleading if not downright dishonest. Therefore, I ask you to notice the emergence and development of these dimensions as they arise naturally in the text culminating in a detailed exploration of the qualities and practices of my inquiry process in *Living Inquiry.*

Third, and as a consequence of the above, the text and my understanding of the question it seeks to answer changed together over time in a dialectical relationship, each challenging and informing the other. At first, I assumed that the overarching question would be the one I had asked in my MPhil/PhD transfer paper: How can I live

my life with authenticity, integrity and joy and help others by sharing the story of my learning in living my life as inquiry? This heuristic served me well as I wrote *The Men's Room* and *Postcards from the Edge.* Indeed, towards the end of both chapters I tell such stories[2] without commentary or interpretation, believing that they speak for themselves and in the hope that they might stimulate you, the reader, to connect with your own self-stories and your own "will to meaning".

However, as I anticipated writing *Healing Journeys,* the emphasis shifted from simply telling my stories to wondering how I could help other people tell theirs, and I realised that the nature of the question needed to change accordingly. In the third interlude, *Writing an abstract,* you can see how – borrowing its formulation from Heidegger – my question became: What is it to ask what this thing –" Living Inquiry" – is? It seemed to me that this implicit invitation for others to join me in exploring *living inquiry* from the inside, so to speak, was more inclusive than my original question and, though challenged by Jack Whitehead and other colleagues, it too served me well enough as I wrote *Healing Journeys*.

At that point the question changed again as I realised that what I was really asking was much simpler and more profound than Heidegger's formulation allowed. Perhaps too I needed time to find the courage to express my fundamental research question in my own words. What fascinated (and still fascinates) me is: What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry? Asking this explicit question enabled me to move confidently into writing *Reshaping my Professional Identity* and then to explore the qualities and practices of my inquiry process in *Living Inquiry.* At about the same time as the overarching question emerged in this form, I also surfaced the image of "unlatching the gate" as a metaphor for the kind of life-affirming learning that, as an educator, it is my purpose in life to encourage and support in others and to sustain in myself.

This question held me throughout the final stages of writing a complete draft of my thesis and I still think it best reflects the substance of its intent. However, thinking about how I want to communicate my learning with the reader of this text has

[2] *Driftwood and Dogmeat* – of my close and loving friendship with another man, and *Into the fire* – of a gradual reconnection with my ex-wife and children after separation and divorce

prompted a further challenge so that the question I am addressing now as I prepare the final document for submission is: What does living my life of inquiry mean for the communication of my learning? In part this thesis traces how, through living my life of inquiry, my professional identity has shifted from police officer to educator. As an educator, I want to do more than present a record of my inquiry: I want my notion of *Living Inquiry* to influence the social formation of the Academy. I must therefore think carefully about how best to communicate my learning to practitioners and scholars alike and structure my thesis accordingly.

The conjunction of an image and a statement in the title of the thesis reflects the *fourth* significant dynamic affecting its form and style – my concern to do justice to all my ways of knowing and, in particular, to acknowledge and honour both *mythos* (creative intuition) and *logos* (conscious structuring) equally. In doing so, I am consciously challenging what I take to be the implicit valorisation of *logo-centric* forms of knowledge and sense-making in the Academy by giving *mytho-centric* forms an equal status. Through a variety of presentational forms, I offer a text that enacts (as well as describes) a complex and multiple epistemology. Thus, I both "show" and "tell" the emotional, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of my inquiries with rich and evocative stories, myth, poetry, the spoken word and visual images. I also engage critically with my lived experience, with narratives of my inquiries and with the ideas of others, to claim academic legitimacy for living life as inquiry and to create my own distinctive form of *living inquiry* as a contribution to an emerging scholarship of inquiry.

Last, writing the thesis has been a rite of passage from being an inquirer to becoming a researcher. I think this is evident in the growing quality and confidence of the writing as I come to understand and integrate other people's ideas with my own reflections upon lived experience and as I deepen the complex, dialectical interplay between authenticity and rigour in the text. In *Chapter Five: Reshaping my Professional Identity*, for example, you will see how I rigorously re-examine an article accepted for publication to ensure that its claims are grounded in data and supported by evidence. I want the variations and improvements over time in the quality and texture of the writing-as-inquiry to be evident to you as an integral part of the thesis

and therefore I have resisted the temptation to "smooth" it out retrospectively by extensive editing (other than to ensure that the meaning is clear and the choices I have made in shaping the text are explicit).

At the end of this long journey of exploration, I find my own voice as a researcher and – having grappled with these complexities – am able to respond simply and clearly to my own question: What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry?

> It means, to live my life as fully as I can, from an optimistic stance, and choosing to act as if I matter, as if each of us matters, as if we can make a difference in the world... It means widening the orbit of our lives, becoming concerned with bigger questions without losing sight of the smaller ones... [Like the orange tree that carries] ripe fruit, blossom and buds... some parts of me have ripened, some are gone, but I also have new growth and I'm blossoming too – as a man, a father, a lover, a healer, an educator, as a researcher, a writer and storyteller. [3]

Having provided some indications of the form and style of the thesis, it may be useful to give some clues to the content of each chapter, if not as a route map at least to give you the lay of the land.

Prelude: Go I know not whither, bring back I know not what
Written between January and May 2000, I ask myself why I would want to write a PhD thesis at all and conclude that to do so would be a tremendous act of self affirmation. After being stuck for several months I invoke the sacred energy of Hermes to inspire and guide me as I write. I explore the difference between "beginning" and "making a start". I decide to make a start by addressing three vital questions: What sort of inquirer am I? What inquiries do I want to write about? How do I want to write about my inquiries?

Introduction: Ending and Beginning
In this section, which was the last to be written and which you are reading now, I come full circle back to the beginning to frame the thesis in terms of its underlying dynamics. I sketch the contents of each section and offer two very different visual

[3] Extracted from *Last Words* in *Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise)*

metaphors to suggest how the constituent parts come together to form a whole – the *gestalt* that represents my *living inquiry* – a Roman villa and a Moebius strip. My intention is to communicate the rationale of the thesis and of its concommittant style and form.

Chapter One: Living Inquiry

In this chapter I draw upon the subsequent narratives of my inquiries and critically engage with ideas from a wide range of literatures to theorise sparingly about *living inquiry*. As the chapter unfolds, my growing understanding of the qualities and practices of my inquiry process enables me to claim legitimacy for ***living inquiry*** in its own terms. I examine in detail, the purposes, scope, epistemology, validity, methodology and position of my approach as a contribution to an emerging scholarship of inquiry. I pay particular attention to the implications of treating *mythos* and *logos* as "equal partners" and identify twelve putative attributes of my ***living inquiry*** which are offered as distinctive standards by which its quality can be judged:

Breadth and Depth	Self-generated Creativity
Duration	Reflection and Reflexivity
Experiential Grounding	Relatability
Passion and Reason	Textual Quality
Courage	Epistemological Balance
Change and Transformation	Critical Judgement

Interlude I: Learning from the writing

In this section I explore what I have learned about the nature of my thesis (and how I want to communicate my learning) since completing the first draft. Having been committed to learn through the process of writing (writing-as-inquiry) I discover that there is another phase in which, in dialogue with others, I learn from the writing. As an educator, I realise that I want to do more than present a record of my inquiry: I want to influence the social formation of the Academy. I explain how, as a result of this, I "fold the text back on itself" and interpolate an additional critical commentary in each of the four narrative chapters to show how the twelve standards of judgement and practice articulated in *Living Inquiry* emerge in the course of my inquiry practice.

Chapter Two: The Men's Room

The first of my narratives of inquiry, a form of "auto-ethnography", a "messy text" in which I offer a collection of stories, poems and narratives connected with a decade of inquiry into men, masculinity and men's development. I focus upon my own experience of ritual events, ongoing men's support groups, relevant literature and collaborative inquiries into men's development in organisations (drawing on several published papers and presentations to conferences). The chapter concludes with an open letter to my close friend Chris that explores and celebrates our relationship as "brothers in arms".

Interlude II: The space between

Having written *The Men's Room*, I engage in dialogue with Jack Whitehead, my supervisor about the text. We address four questions: What question(s) is the text seeking to answer? What claims to knowledge am I making? By what standards should the text be judged? How is this inquiry action research? I deepen my understanding of these issues and go on to consider objections to the "personal-confessional" genre of research as well as the need to place some limits on disclosure to avoid causing harm to those I love (and to acknowledge their right to a degree of privacy).

Chapter Three: Postcards from the Edge

In this chapter I turn to the struggle to find happiness in loving relationships beginning with the effect of my father's early death and moving to the events surrounding my recent separation and divorce. I consider the tension between living and telling and seek to "deftly integrate" them in my narratives. I explore the healing power of fiction and present stories, poetry and visual images as well as more conventional prose. I treat my experiences as conscious acts of inquiry and "interrogate" the text to identify and articulate some of the qualities and practices of my first-person inquiry process. It closes with a piece called *Into the Fire,* a mosaic revealing some of the "rediscovery of connection" with my ex-wife and children.

Interlude III: Writing an Abstract

After sending the previous chapter to Jack Whitehead he invites me (or perhaps challenges me) to produce an abstract of the thesis. Initially, I resist his invitation and

then I attempt a first draft. I present it for consideration to a validation group of my colleagues at a CARPP workshop where it is thought to be over-long, more of a summary than an abstract. The process advances my understanding of my emerging thesis and I articulate a new overarching question: "What is it to ask what this thing - "Living Inquiry" – is? Subsequently the abstract undergoes many revisions before, ironically, my examiners at the *viva voce* on 22nd March 2002 declare their preference for the original version and ask me to reinstate it with some amendments and additions at the head of the thesis where it now stands.

Chapter Four: Healing Journeys

Here I explore ontological issues and the nature of my inquiring self. I draw on an old Indian proverb to suggest that development of the self requires us to pay attention to four aspects of being: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual and illustrate some of the ways I have addressed these. I briefly consider post-modern notions of the "saturated self" which I reject in favour of "narrative identity", a self "born in stories" and I present one such story: *The man who lived as a king* as a real-life example of self-renewal after "narrative wreckage". I develop the idea of "transformative spaces" as containers for transformational learning - drawing on notions of *thymos*, "voice", Gestalt psychology and experiences of creating ritual spaces to suggest some of the conditions that promote such learning. I go on to inquire into my practice as a storyteller and educator, through the medium of a storytelling workshop I ran at Bath University in March 2000. At the heart of this chapter, I tell the story of *Jumping Mouse* as a meta-myth for my life of inquiry and explore the ontological significance of such archetypal stories.

Interlude IV: The point of no return

I consider the implications of offering up my thesis for examination and face my "doubts" about whether I will be able to make my emerging ideas about *living inquiry* intelligible to others. I resist the temptation to adopt Jack Whitehead's living (educational) theory framework, preferring to trust my own originality of mind and critical judgement. I introduce the notion of a "hunter-gatherer" epistemology and present the image of a gate with its attendant metaphor of "unlatching the gate" as connotative of my purpose as an educator (and inquirer).

Chapter Five: Reshaping my Professional Identity

I begin by reformulating my overarching inquiry question as: What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry? I then adopt a narrative basis for reshaping my professional identity from police officer to educator and offer a sketch map of my changing "professional knowledge landscape". I relate some "travellers tales" of my exploration of this landscape since 1988, focusing on three major police educational programmes for whose design and delivery I have been responsible. I acknowledge the influence of Jack Whitehead's living (educational) theory framework on my understanding of my professional development but subsume it within my notion of *living inquiry.*

I look at the purposes, methods and outcomes of the three educational programmes and show how they represent a gradual move towards congruence with my "espoused values" about people and education. I frequently refer readers to *Police Stories* to provide the personal and professional context for this work. The chapter includes the text of an article on the use of collaborative inquiry in a hierarchical organisation that has been accepted for publication in December 2001 in a special edition of the journal *Systemic Practice and Action Research*. The article is rigorously re-examined to ensure that its claims are grounded in data and supported by evidence.

Interlude V: Turning for home

I recognise that it is time to build upon the preceding narratives of inquiry and shift the emphasis from "showing" to "telling" by subjecting them to a deeper level of reflection and theorising to position the research conceptually and in relation to the literature. I am moved by Jack Whitehead's opinion that my work will make a substantial contribution to self-study action research and I reaffirm my intention to articulate my own distinctive form of *living inquiry.* I express the hope that, having read the four narrative chapters, you might want to reread *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* (which originally followed this *Interlude*) with a richer, deeper understanding of how it relates to the underlying and interrelated strands of inquiry before moving on to the final chapter.

Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise)
Here, for the reasons outlined earlier in this *Introduction*, I return to a wider consideration of *living inquiry.* The chapter revisits questions of validity, authenticity and rigour through imaginary dialogues with Peter Reason, Judi Marshall and Jack Whitehead, my tutors at CARPP.

In the second section I respond to the request, made by my examiners Professor Helen Simons and Doctor Donna Ladkin, to make several minor amendments to the thesis by articulating six principles that inform my continuing life of inquiry and by showing how my *scholarship of living inquiry* both draws upon and pushes against the edges of a number of established fields of inquiry to make an original contribution to an emerging scholarship of inquiry.

The chapter closes with a final reflection on the whole thesis, *Last Words* in which as the author of this text and as the author of my life, I find my own voice as a researcher to respond simply and directly to the question: What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry?

Note: Ethical considerations
A brief consideration of some ethical dilemmas in participative and self-study research: I explain the approach taken in the thesis to naming colleagues, friends and family members in the light of published ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human research subjects.

Appendix A: Police Stories
Written in 1998 and updated in 2001, this is both a narrative of and a reflection upon my near thirty-year police career. It provides an important personal and professional backdrop to my other inquiries. It has been on the Internet for several years (www.actionresearch.net) and attracted comment from a number of police and non-police readers, ranging from anger and disbelief to rueful familiarity. I refer to it frequently throughout the thesis, notably in *Chapter Five: Reshaping my Professional Identity.*

Appendix B: The Future for Men at Work

This appendix is a transcript of the recording of my presentation to the *Men and Women: Working Together for a Change* conference, which is included in *Chapter Two: The Men's Poem*.

Appendix C: Jumping Mouse

This appendix is a transcript of the recording of my telling of *Jumping Mouse*, which is included in *Chapter Four: Healing Journeys.*

These are difficult and dangerous times. I am writing these words five weeks after the dreadful attacks on New York and Washington: the military campaign against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is entering its second week, there are reported cases of anthrax in the United States and further terrorist reprisals are threatened. In such circumstances I have had to ask myself whether this exploration of *living inquiry* still matters. My answer is not glib and has taken much soul-searching: I believe that living a life of inquiry matters more than ever. *Living inquiry* is the antithesis both of fundamentalism (by which I mean the unthinking acceptance of dogma and the surrender of personal responsibility and judgement) and of complacency (by which I mean a lazy and arrogant assumption of superiority). Striving to become more aware of oneself and to become more open to "other" have never been more important than now as the world stands once more on the brink of a terrible clash of civilisations.

So I am completing this thesis conscious both of my smallness in the world and of the potential of one person's story of *living inquiry* to be a force for good. As a storyteller, I know that it is the personal and the particular – not abstract generalisations – which enable us to relate to each other and to connect with the universal. Each of us, in telling the story of our life of inquiry, tells the story of Every(wo)man. [4] You will find that mine is a personal and passionate text that, I believe, speaks to the human condition (perhaps because it makes no claim to speak for another) and sometimes transcends the boundaries of academic writing to achieve "mythic resonance" – where ontology, epistemology and cosmology meet.

[4] I am thinking here of this universal quality in the 15th Century English morality play *Everyman.* An excellent version can be found at www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/everyman.html.

All that remains in this *Introduction* is to welcome you to my thesis. I hope that you find it interesting, enjoyable and worthwhile, that reading it evokes some of your self-stories and engages your own "will to meaning", that it encourages you to honour your own life of inquiry, and that it persuades you of the value and academic legitimacy of my particular form of *living inquiry*.

Chapter One

Living Inquiry

Throughout this thesis I refer to my inquiry practice as *living inquiry* and I offer narratives, "messy texts" (Denzin 1996) of my inquiries into my life as a man, my struggle to find happiness and fulfilment in loving relationships, my search for healing, and the shift in my professional identity away from mainstream policing towards an educative role. These texts show rather than tell you, the reader, the purpose and scope of my inquiries, the standards of judgement and practice that I bring to bear in living my life as inquiry, my methodology, my forms of sense-making and the nature and extent of my contribution to scholarship.

In this chapter I reverse this emphasis (telling rather than showing) in order to make my claims in each of these areas more explicit though, as I indicate in *Turning for Home*, creative intuition and conscious structuring are not mutually exclusive activities and I shall continue to call on both my imaginative and critical faculties as I set, justify and assess my thesis against its own original criteria and in relation to the ideas of others.

As I inquire into the practices and meanings that I associate with the term *living inquiry*, I shall pick up some of the incidental reflections and speculations from subsequent chapters, adding fresh insights and a further level of reflection and theorising. In my use of theoretical resources, I adopt Richard Winter's dictum as a warrant for my own approach:

> Whereas academic research is set up as a carefully designed response to a body of theory as it exists at a given moment, action research, having initially established the scope and significance of its provisional topic by reference to general intellectual and professional debates, then becomes a relatively free-flowing dialogue with various bodies of theory as the progress of the work brings new aspects into significance. Action research, therefore, does not aim to make an initial "comprehensive" review of all previous relevant knowledge; rather it aims instead at being *flexible* and *creative* as

> it *improvises* the relevance of different types of theory at different stages in the work. (Winter 1998) (Emphasis in the original)

Also, without denying the value or significance of academic literature I shall not place such narrow limits around my theoretical resources. Story, art, poetry and drama have much to offer and have also influenced my understanding and my practice. Where they seem relevant I shall draw upon them freely. By way of illustration, let me offer the following story, which I take from the Zen Buddhist tradition[1], to suggest something of the flavour of what I mean by the term *living inquiry*.

Many years' ago in Japan, there was a warrior – one of those itinerant Samurai known as *ronin*. He had an ambition to find fame and fortune as the finest archer in the land. In pursuit of his dream, he travelled the length and breadth of the country looking for a master-bowman to help him improve his technique. Few of those he encountered had much to teach him but he continued searching and eventually, just as he was about to give up, he chanced upon some dilapidated farm buildings far from other habitation. All over the buildings, in the most unlikely and inaccessible places, were hundreds of hand-painted targets, each with an arrow at the exact centre of the bulls-eye.

The Samurai knocked at the door and begged the occupant to share the secret of his uncanny accuracy. A bargain was struck and the master-bowman offered to demonstrate his craft. Pausing a few moments to slow his breath and meditate, he nocked an arrow onto the string and – in the classic stance – drew the well-worn bow. With the sudden gentleness of a young child releasing its hold on an adult's finger, he loosed the arrow towards the barn where it came to rest, planting itself into... a perfectly blank stretch of the wall.

"You missed," said the Samurai.

"Not so," replied the bowman, stepping up to the barn, picking up a paintbrush and marking a target round the quivering arrow. "Every time, a bulls-eye."

"But why do you do this?" asked the stunned warrior.

[1] This is my re-telling of a tale, which I first shared with colleagues at the CARPP Conference in September 2000 as an "example" of action research. I have loosely adapted it from Eugen Herrigel's classic text: *Herrigel, E. (1953). Zen in the Art of Archery. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.*

"Because I am intensely curious to learn where every arrow lands," said the bowman.

In that moment, the Samurai was enlightened. He forgot his dream of fame and fortune and became the master-bowman's pupil in the art of Zen archery.

I have loosed many "arrows" in the course of my living inquiries. It is about time to paint some targets!

Questions of purpose

If, as I have asserted, the overarching question that this text seeks to answer is: What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry? then *living inquiry* is the term I use to represent both the sense I have of living my whole life as inquiry ("the one") and the separate, though interrelated, inquiries that I undertake from time to time ("the many"). I did not coin the term. I think it is likely that Bill Torbert can take credit for that (Torbert 1991) though his usage of the term had dropped out of my mind when, writing in my research journal in May 1999, I juxtaposed these two words to indicate that, for me, the process of inquiry needs to be alive and vital, and that I seek to live with an inquiring spirit. Recognising this twin aspiration, my usage of the word *living* in this context has a double meaning, as both verb and adjective.

Having indicated what I mean by the term *living inquiry,* I am conscious of the need to respond to the question that Peter Reason (Reason 1996) suggests should be fully explored in every research proposal and every PhD thesis: "What is the purpose of my inquiry?" I began to address this issue early in the thesis when, in the *Prelude,* I asked myself (and responded to) three related questions: What sort of inquirer am I? What inquiries do I want to write about? How do I want to write about my inquiries? Paradoxically, I think I am better able to answer Peter's question directly now, having written about my living inquiries in some detail, than I would have been at the outset. I think it is important to look at the purpose(s) of my *living inquiry* both in terms of "Why do I inquire?" (That is to say, my reasons or motives for living life as inquiry) and in terms of "To what ends do I inquire?" (That is to say the goals of my inquiries).

In the opening paragraph of the *Prelude*, I declared "I inquire because I must" and in the course of an hour-long tape-recorded dialogue about the nature of my *living inquiry* at the September 2000 CARPP Conference, in response to Peter Reason asking me to say why living my life as inquiry matters to me, I said:

> The only way I can make sense of my life is in terms of finding meaning through... inquiry. The strongest sense I have of who I am is being a seeker, being someone who constantly pushes wherever I am. What is the boundary? What is next? What is beyond? And tries to find meaning... I have a deep hunger for meaning.

These are impassioned, heartfelt statements that reflect a basic existential choice. To understand and articulate this choice more clearly I turn to Victor Frankl, whose book *Man's Search for Meaning*, (Frankl 1984) based on his experience of life as Prisoner No. 119,104 in a Nazi concentration camp, has profoundly influenced my thinking. His conceptualisation of the *will* to meaning as: "the striving to find a concrete meaning in personal existence" (p106) resonates with my own felt experience and I find myself nodding in agreement as I read:

> Man's [sic] search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own *will* to meaning. (p105)

There are times too when I can identify with what Frankl calls "tragic optimism":

> That is, an optimism in the face of tragedy and in view of the human potential which at its best always allows for: (1) turning suffering into a human achievement and accomplishment; (2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better; and (3) deriving from life's transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action. (p139/140)

Though I believe that there are also grounds for an optimism born of joy, for following what Mathew Fox describes as the *via positiva*: "a way or path of affirmation, thanksgiving, ecstasy" (Fox 1983, p33). My existential choice is therefore one of

optimism, of doing my best, of striving to make things better or to make the best out of any given situation – for myself and with others.

When I turn to the goals of my living inquiries (the ends to which I inquire) I find that I want to undermine too instrumental a view and I am reminded of the relationship between the goal and the opus in the great work of alchemical transformation. Carl Gustav Jung (Jung 1976) expresses this beautifully:

> The goal is important only as an idea; the essential thing is the opus which leads to the goal; *that* is the goal of a lifetime.

And yet, I know that I am not detached from the ends to which I inquire, even if I am not fully aware of them beforehand. Let me explore this further, using a framework devised by Peter Reason and Judi Marshall (Reason and Marshall 1987). They suggest that one can think of research as:

> *For me:* "The motivation to do research is personal and often expresses needs for personal development, change and learning." *For us*: "It is a cooperative endeavour which enables a community of people to make sense of and act effectively in their world." *For them*: "For the community of scholars of which the researcher is a member or potential member." (p112)

Reading the transcript of the tape-recorded conversation I quoted earlier, I see that I am making claims in respect of each of these areas for my *living inquiry.*

For me

Geoff: I'm calling this thing *living inquiry.* I'm quite close to what Judi [Marshall] writes about in terms of living life as inquiry although I feel that mine is less consciously lived as inquiry – much of it. I guess what I want to do is seek to articulate and claim validity for that less-consciously framed inquiry... as important, and natural, and human, and what we do. And that it matters to live one's life in an inquiring way. It matters that I've done it for me and it matters that people do... live life as inquiry.

For us

Peter (Reason): I'm just wondering what it's like when you say you are a passionate educator. Do you also see other people not living their lives as inquiry and do you want to stir them up? Is that another side of why it matters?

Geoff: I don't necessarily want people to live a particular kind of life. I want to help people live the lives they want to live and be the people they can be.

For them

Mary (Casey): Can I ask you one other question? If the third person stuff is about the broader community out there, why do you want to write a PhD about something that is so personally first person?

Geoff: Because I believe that every life matters. I believe my life matters and I believe that any life lived as inquiry is important and I believe that my life lived as inquiry is important. And I want to claim that in this place (I mean this world, and this academic world) which so often tends to deny that.

Peter (Reason): So you have a third person purpose in writing about it?

Geoff: I have an agenda which is to claim [academic] legitimacy for a life lived as inquiry, in particular my life lived as inquiry but [also] for *a* life lived as inquiry. It seems to me important to do that.

All well and good, I hear you say, but how are these aspirations actually manifested in the course of your living inquiries? Let us look, briefly, at each of the four main strands of inquiry in this thesis. In *The Men's Room,* I present narratives in which I explore my masculine identity and seek to influence men's development in organisational and non-organisational settings. The underlying question addressed by the text might be expressed as "How can I live well as a man in the world?" The inquiry is *for me,* in the sense of meeting my personal development needs as identified in the extract from *Navigator* (Traeger, Daisley et al. 1999) which describes the ways in which I claim my involvement in menswork has influenced me. It is *for us,* in terms of my membership of men's groups and other developmental events for men that I have facilitated or co-facilitated. It is *for them,* in terms of my attempts to

communicate my learning from these inquiries through speaking at conferences, publishing articles and raising the issue of men's gender conditioning and masculine stereotyping in the police service through my application for a Bramshill Fellowship.

In *Postcards from the Edge,* I present narratives in which I examine my conduct in loving relationships to find living standards of renewal during and after separation and divorce. The underlying question addressed by the text might be expressed as "How can I enter more fully into loving relationships?" The inquiry is *for me,* in terms of my struggle to find happiness and fulfilment by leaving an unhappy marriage and re-engaging with my children in a loving and positive manner. It is *for us,* only in the sense (I think) of its eventual outcome of an amicable relationship with my ex-wife and close and loving relationships with my children. I acknowledge in the text that one might characterise the breakdown of our marriage as a failure of "second person" inquiry. It is *for them,* only in the sense that I offer the text publicly in this thesis in the hope that sharing my story may help others towards a deeper understanding of their own.

In *Healing Journeys,* I present narratives in which I describe how I am sharing what I am learning in my journey of self-healing with others by co-creating "transformative spaces" for our learning and healing. The underlying question might be expressed as "How can I find healing for body and soul?" The inquiry is *for me,* as I create and tell stories to move beyond "narrative wreckage". It is *for us,* as I co-create "transformative spaces" such as those I describe at Hazel Hill and Bramshill for ritual and for storytelling. It is *for them,* when I share my learning about story with wider audiences through publishing *A Winter's Tale* (Mead 1997) and running workshops for researchers and students in academic institutions (Middlesex University MSc in Personal and Organisational Development, Bath University CARPP, Bath University MSc Responsibility and Business Practice). I also intend to write papers on *Self and Story* and *Transformative Spaces,* based on material in the chapter *Healing Journeys,* once I have completed my PhD.

In *Reshaping my Professional Identity* and *Police Stories,* I present narratives in which I discover and extend my educative influence during twenty-eight years in the police

service and reshape my professional identity away from mainstream policing towards an educative role. The underlying question might be expressed as "How can I exercise my educative influence for good?" The inquiry is *for me,* as I find the image of the five-barred gate and come to realise its significance in defining my sense of purpose in the world. It is *for us,* as I work with others to design and deliver various educational programmes in the police service between 1998 and 2001. In the text, I show how each programme has moved more strongly in the direction of collaborative inquiry. It is *for them,* as I seek to influence the police service and wider social formations through publication (Mead 1988; Mead 1990; Mead 1991; Mead 1995a; Mead 2001) and through my influence on the design of the Cabinet Office's recently launched Public Service Leaders Scheme.

I believe that there is sufficient evidence here to claim that my *living inquiry* (in terms of both "the one" and "the many") achieves a reasonable balance between *me, us* and *them,* though not all are present to the same degree at all times. I feel confident that my *living inquiry* meets the standards implied by Peter and Judi's stricture:

> We regard it as unfortunate and degenerate if any one of these three purposes of enquiry becomes dominant and overwhelms either one or both of the others: all three are authentic and complementary aspects of the research process. (Reason and Marshall 1987)

I also feel confident that what I have to say about the purposes of my *living inquiry* (particularly in the holistic sense of claiming legitimacy for life lived as inquiry) makes a useful contribution to wider debates on the purposes of human inquiry.[2]

Finally, I would like to close this section by adding my voice to the many voices supporting the claim made by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (Reason and Bradbury 2000) in their introduction to the *Handbook of Action Research,* that:

[2] See, for example Reason, P. (1996). "Reflections on the Purposes of Human Inquiry." Qualitative Inquiry **2**(1): 15-28.

> ... the purpose of human inquiry is the flourishing of life, the life of human persons, of human communities, and increasingly of the more-than-human world of which we are a part. (p10)

Questions of scope

Perhaps I can now take this exploration of *living inquiry* a bit further by considering its scope. I have already said that I use the term to represent both the sense I have of living my whole life as inquiry and the separate, though interrelated, inquiries that I undertake from time to time. But what does that mean in practice? What are the dimensions (and limits) of my inquiries and of living life as inquiry? The four main strands of inquiry are quite apparent in the text, each with its own chapter; *The Men's Room, Postcards from the Edge, Healing Journeys,* and *Reshaping my Professional Identity.*

I could simply point to these but that would only be part of the answer. Yes, the content of these inquiries does reveal some of my pre-occupations, areas of my life in which I have inquired deeply (and publicly) but they do not, by themselves, constitute the whole of my *living inquiry.* I am arguing, in this thesis, that there is something more, that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and that this "something more" lies at the heart of my contribution to a scholarship of inquiry.

In adopting such a holistic view of inquiry, I must acknowledge my personal and intellectual debt to Petruska Clarkson who was my teacher and mentor for five years (1991-95) as I trained in Gestalt psychology and organisational consultancy. The more I explore my own inquiry practice, the more I become aware of her influence and of the ways in which she encouraged me to see the world. In a brilliant article *2,500 Years of Gestalt: From Heraclitus to the Big Bang* (Clarkson 1993) she traces the strand of holistic thought from: "the beginning of time in the Western tradition, to the current frontiers of the scientific enquiry of our current world" – from Heraclitus (Guerriere 1980) through Fritz Perls, Ralph Hefferline and Paul Goodman, the founders of Gestalt therapy (Perls, Hefferline et al. 1984) to modern interpreters of quantum physics and complexity theory such as Fritjof Capra (Capra 1983), Danah Zohar (Zohar 1990) and David Bohm (Bohm 1983).

Clarkson puts it in a nutshell when she describes this world view as one of an "ever-changing dynamically interconnected whole" (Clarkson 1993) and offers the concept of the *fractal* as a metaphor for the many ways in which fragments of our lived experience encode and enfold the whole of our lives. During our dialogue at the September 2000 CARPP Conference, colleagues helped me to tease out how this aspect of *living inquiry* is manifested in practice. I have just described my separate inquiries, and Mary asks:

> **Mary (Casey):** Who are you when you are inquiring? Are you the teacher doing a programme for one part of it, the policeman for the other part? There was so much that you were doing that I was just...
>
> Geoff: Yes. That's a pattern. I do a lot and I seek to synthesise, I seek to connect but I realise that in writing [about what I do] I'm pulling apart in order to try and make some sense about different bits. Who am I? I don't know really... At one time I would have said that I was distinctly different people and I feel there has been a considerable convergence. That's a very helpful question. In fact, one of the things that has helped me converge, that has been really important to me... Perhaps why I am doing a PhD, is that it is helping that process of convergence. It is helping me to synthesise and make sense of the whole. In one sense it is about seeking to be whole...

It is in these ways, through a sense of myself as an "ever-changing dynamically interconnected whole," through discovering over time that what I learn in one part of my life has relevance (even if not immediately obvious) for the rest of it, that my *living inquiry* embraces the apparent paradox of the many and the one.

If the first dimension is that of the many and the one, my second is that of "inner" and "outer", by which I mean a concern with the inner life of the psyche as well as the outer life of working for good in the world. This dimension is similar to one identified by Bradbury and Lichtenstein in their recent paper on *Relationality in Organizational Research* (Bradbury and Lichtenstein 2000) in which they draw a distinction between the "interior view – tacit, non-visible" and the "exterior view – explicit, visible" (p556). They make the point that these merge into each other though I would go further than that and say that the two are inextricably linked.

My sense is that "inner" and "outer" interpenetrate and contain each other as in the Taoist symbol of yin/yang. As I follow the inner path I find that I am inevitably faced with questions of identity and purpose in the world – as, for example, with the image of the gate that encourages and supports me in my practice as an educator. As a passionate educator, engaged with others and seeking to influence social formations, I am inevitably confronted by myself as a "living contradiction" when I negate deeply held values and beliefs in practice (Whitehead 1993) and drawn to consider my deepest values and assumptions.

It seems to me that this is where our sense of vocation comes from – the meeting of our own passion and the world's need. Perhaps this is what mythologist Joseph Campbell has in mind when he exhorts us to "follow your bliss" (Cousineau 1999) or, as the German poet Novalis puts it:

> The seat of the soul is where the inner world and the outer world meet. Where they overlap, it is in every point of the overlap (Bly 1995)

In each chapter of this thesis, you will find that I range across "inner" and "outer." I speak freely of my imaginal life, of the soul, of emotions, of relationships, of ideas, of my work as an educator and police officer and these concerns are reflected in an equally wide variety of presentational forms; analytical writing, narratives, self-stories, poetry, images, even sculpture. These "messy texts" (the nature of which I explore in *The Men's Room*) invite you, the reader, to engage with my *living inquiry* not as a detached observer but as a participant, opening yourself to your own inner and outer lives as you read.

Associated with these two dimensions, is a third: that of personal and professional. Again, I recognise that it can be helpful to distinguish between them but I do not regard them as completely separate – indeed, personal responsibility for maintaining and improving standards of practice has long been considered a defining characteristic of being a "professional" worker. In that sense, I am a person in a professional role. I am expected to exercise personal initiative and responsibility and to bring my whole self to my work. Richard Winter (Winter 1989) goes so far as to say that:

> The development of understanding and the initiation of innovative practice are... a possibility and even a responsibility for professional workers *in general.* (p4)

But there is also a longstanding convention in much academic writing that personal means "private" (therefore to be avoided) and that professional means "public" (therefore open to scrutiny). However, we only have to look at the stories told by writers and academics such as Carol Gilligan (Gilligan 1993) and Judi Marshall (Marshall 1995) to see that the personal, the political and the professional cannot be so readily disentangled. It is no accident that we have feminists to thank for breaking down such artificial (and stereotypically male) barriers.

In this thesis, when writing about my professional practice, I am conscious of myself as a whole person and when writing self-stories I am generally looking to make wider connections. So, for example, in *Reshaping my Professional Identity,* when I speak about the values underpinning my educational practice, I cannot separate my core beliefs about people and about educational processes and about the educative relationship. I do place some limits on what I am prepared to make public (there are some private aspects of my "personal" and "professional" lives). That is not to say that they are excluded from my *living inquiry* but that I choose not to write about them. As I say in *Postcards from the Edge*:

> Some stories are simply not mine to tell and some that are have no place in this thesis. I need to balance their relevance and contribution to this discourse against their potential to cause harm to those I love (and their right to a degree of privacy).

The fourth dimension (there may be others but four would seem to be enough in a three-dimensional world accustomed to one-dimensional research) borrows from Bill Torbert's (Torbert 1997) conceptualisation of research as *first-person, second-person,* and *third-person.* There is clearly a relationship between this framework and Peter Reason and Judi Marshall's notion of research as *for me, for us,* and *for them* (Reason and Marshall 1987) which I used earlier to explicate the purposes of my *living inquiry.* However, I think the *first-, second-,* and *third-person* typology is more helpful in mapping the domains or scope of the research. I refer to this model briefly in *Reshaping my Professional Identity,* drawing upon Reason and Bradbury's succinct

formulation from the preface to the *Handbook of Action Research* (Reason and Bradbury 2000). Now, I want to take a wider view of my research practice in each of these three domains.

First-person research

> First-person action research/practice skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act with awareness and to choose carefully and to assess effects in the outside world while acting. First-person research practice brings inquiry into more and more of our moments of action – not as outside researchers but in the whole range of everyday activities (Reason and Bradbury 2000)

I think that my passion for first-person research is evident throughout this thesis, from *The Men's Room* (for example, the activities and events described in the poem "Childhood's End" and in my narrative "In Search of Spirit"), through *Postcards from the Edge* (for example, my use of divination and creative writing techniques in "All kids are beautiful" to help me understand how to move forward) and *Healing Journeys* (for example, my exploration of "self-stories" as a way out of "narrative wreckage"), to *Reshaping my Professional Identity* (for example, in my commitment to five year's personal therapy, in part to support my work as an educator). This has helped me develop a high level of what Peter Reason (Reason 1994) has called *critical subjectivity*:

> Critical subjectivity means that we do not suppress our primary subjective experience, that we accept that our knowing is from a perspective; it also means that we are *aware* of that perspective and of its bias, and we *articulate* it in our communications. Critical subjectivity involves a self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing. (pp326/327)

Most of these examples are what Reason and Torbert (Reason and Torbert 2001) call "upstream" first-person research/practice and there may be less evidence in the thesis of "downstream" first-person research/practice involving:

> ... critical examination of day to day behaviour, drawing on qualities of mindfulness and self-awareness to critically notice the congruence of one's behaviour with

purposes, espoused theories with theories-in-use, and the impact of one's actions in the wider world.

I'm curious about the paucity of evidence of "down-stream" first-person research/practice in the thesis since I hold strong values about authenticity and integrity, which often cause me to challenge myself about the congruence of my behaviour. I self-monitor to a considerable degree but in a rather taken-for-granted, undocumented and undisciplined way. I explained this process in email correspondence with Peter Reason last year (June 2000) in relation to an account I had written of dealing with the aftermath of the suicide of a close work colleague:

Geoff: Peter, I get the impression that you expect my self-reflective practice to feature quite a sophisticated and contemporaneous internal dialogue. But I don't seem to operate like that - especially in crisis situations. Either I don't think in those ways or I don't have access to those ways of thinking at the time. Rather, I rely on a more kinaesthetic sense of rightness. I just "know." Of course sometimes I "know" wrong and sometimes I don't "know" at all.

Much of my internal processing is at the unconscious level. I mull, allow thoughts and ideas to compost, and wait until answers appear rather than working things out. Guy Claxton (Claxton 1997) contrasts this "tortoise mind" with the more actively rational "hare brain." He argues that it is the patience and confusion of the former rather than the rigour and certainty of the latter that are the precursors to wisdom. This is my experience too and my preferred method of inquiry. I do, I notice, I mull, I wait, and I "know".

Sometimes the knowing presents itself as metaphor or image, sometimes as a deep - almost ineffable - sense of the grain of a situation or as a physical sensation of ease and lack of resistance. Often I can only articulate the knowing later - particularly when I speak or write about past events.

Peter: My experience of reading [your accounts] was of being taken into the experience to quite a large extent. I found the two parts complementary, the second part being more reflective, a bit more outside. Indeed, it could be so, while the first part is more "in your face" with the experience. I think the immediate reflection, the pouring out onto paper is important, but so also is the standing back (I don't see it as contrived). Then there is a further standing back in the introduction you have written to me [above], which gives me a "theory" of practice

"I do, I notice, I mull, I wait, I know", and also some "theory" of inquiry – e.g. the paragraph about the metaphor.

I don't see how you could be more systematic about self-inquiry in these kinds of situations. You will be overtaken by the situation, and keeping a record of "contemporaneous internal dialogue" will be difficult... On the other hand, I do think that you can be more systematic in more "normal" situations, you can track ways [you] repeat old patterns both in the moment and in reflection. These practices of action inquiry, the reflections and the experimental actions build the skill of reflective action both for regular life and for these moments when so much is asked of us.

I include our exchange here because I think it says something important about my process of self-reflective inquiry and, given its origins, supports my claim to live the whole of my life as inquiry. I have omitted the original accounts because I do not think they are necessary and to protect the privacy of my late colleague's family. Peter makes the point that a more disciplined practice might hone my self-reflective skills and I have to agree that this is an area for development. Later, when "positioning" my research practice in relation to the field of human inquiry, I shall look more closely at how these aspects of my *living inquiry* relate to the ideas of three *first-person* action-researchers whose work has influenced me considerably; Judi Marshall, Jack Whitehead and Bill Torbert.

Second-person research

> Second-person action research/practice addresses our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern, for example in the service of improving our personal and professional practice both individually and separately. Second-person inquiry starts with interpersonal dialogue and includes the development of communities of inquiry and learning organizations (Reason and Bradbury 2000)

My engagement in second-person research/practice varies widely across the different strands of my *living inquiry.* I have already acknowledged that, in hindsight, one aspect of the breakdown of my marriage was a failure to maintain a "joint inquiry" into our future. As I withdrew psychologically, I limited the scope of the inquiry until my wife and children were excluded. The effect (and probably the intention) was to

minimise their influence over me as I left the family home and the marriage came to an end. Elsewhere, inquiring with others – albeit often in an informal and unstructured way – has been the norm.

In *The Men's Room,* there are narratives about men's retreats, men's support groups, a co-operative inquiry into men's development in organisations, and (closest to my heart) *Driftwood and Dogmeat* – a story of friendship, which as Peter Reason and Bill Torbert say: "[is] maybe the most fundamental form of second-person research/practice". All of these are places where we: "engage[d] in conversations with each other which enhance[d] our respective first-person inquiries" (Reason and Torbert 2001). The inquiry into men's development in organisations in 1995 was my first exposure to more systematic second-person research/practice of the kind articulated by Peter Reason and John Heron (Heron 1996; Reason 1999) which I took as the basis for my work with the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project in the Hertfordshire Constabulary and which I write about extensively in *Reshaping my Professional Identity.*

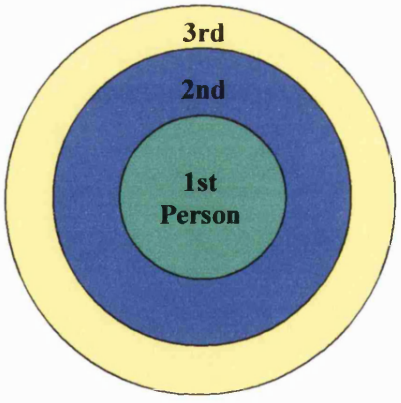
Even renewal and recovery from "narrative wreckage" by the creation of new self-stories requires a social process of inquiry. As I say in *Healing Journeys*: "Perhaps then the self is a telling. If so it comes into being in communion with others for there can be no telling without listening." Taken as a whole, this thesis demonstrates my growing understanding of the philosophy and theory of second-person research/practice and competence as a practitioner. It is certainly a feature that permeates most of my *living inquiry.*

Third-person research

> Third-person research/practice aims... to create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face (say, in a large, geographically dispersed corporation), have an impersonal quality. Writing and other reporting of the process and outcomes of inquiries can also be an important form of third-person inquiry (Reason and Bradbury 2000)

It is in this arena that I make the most modest claims though it is increasingly where my energy and excitement is moving me. I am very conscious of making my inquiries public through this thesis (especially those parts of it that already appear on the Internet)[3] and, as is apparent in subsequent chapters, have published several articles on menswork, storytelling, organisational change, supervising executive coaches, and leadership development. Latterly, I have been taking more direct action to influence "social formations" through the Cabinet Office's new Public Service Leaders Scheme, for which I have designed (and will supervise for the next three years) a series of facilitated Action Inquiry Groups based on principles of co-operative inquiry and drawing on the work of the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project. I hope this will have a positive effect on the quality of public service leadership from which we might all benefit in the long run. If my claims to third-person research/practice thus far are modest, I place no such limits on my aspirations.

Finally, in relation to this dimension of first-, second-, and third-person research, I want to claim that my *living inquiry* embraces all three domains and seeks to integrate them in my practice. Reason and Bradbury (Ibid.) suggest that: "the most compelling and enduring kind of action research will engage all three strategies." I agree with this view and, having begun this chapter with the story of a Zen archer painting targets where his arrows fell, suggest that this is also an appropriate image for the relationship between these three research strategies.



Relationship between first-, second-, and third-person inquiry

[3] See www.actionresearch.net under *Police Stories*

Reason and Bradbury (Ibid) explain the relationship in this way:

> First-person research practice is best conducted in the company of friends and colleagues who can provide support and challenge; such a company may indeed evolve into a second-person collaborative inquiry process. On the other hand, attempts at third-person research which are not based in rigorous first-person inquiry into one's purposes and practices are open to distortion through unregulated bias.

I put it somewhat differently in the *Prelude* but I think it amounts to pretty much the same thing:

> I am... always conscious of myself at the centre of any inquiry. This is not to say that I do not value second-person and third-person research or that I neglect the "we" and the "they". Rather, it is that I begin and end with "I". Begin - in the sense that I am motivated to inquire by my own discomfort with a situation or my desire for change or improvement. End – in the sense that I seek to be congruent in my own practice with what I might hope for in others.

Questions of epistemology

How I inquire both shapes and is shaped by questions of epistemology, of how I come to know and make sense of my being and doing in the world. These are important issues for, as Nancy Goldberger and her co-authors say:

> Our basic assumptions about the nature of truth and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it (Goldberger, Clinchy et al. 1987)

I touch upon some aspects of sense-making when discussing "downstream" first-person research/practice in *Questions of scope* and demonstrate many different ways of knowing throughout the thesis. However, a more systematic examination of my epistemology is an essential part of understanding and articulating the nature of my *living inquiry.* First, I want to acknowledge the influence of two related strands of post-positivist epistemological thinking; *participatory knowing* and *multiple (or extended) epistemologies*. In the light of this, I will then present some prominent

features of my own participatory/extended epistemology, paying particular attention to the forms of sense-making that I employ and of my attempts to balance and integrate them in this thesis.

Participatory knowing

In *Participation in Human Inquiry* (Reason 1994), Peter Reason explores the notion of "participation" in human consciousness. Though he is at pains to disown a straightforwardly linear process, he traces the development of three major world-views or paradigms (Kuhn 1962) which he calls "original participation", "unconscious participation" and "future participation" - the first representing the undifferentiated, embedded, unreflective consciousness of pre-modern societies, the second characterising the modernist Cartesian separation between conscious human subject and what it sees as the less-than-human world. The third term he reserves for a potential resolution of the dialectic between these two modes of perception and thinking as:

> A form of consciousness rooted in concrete experience and grounded in the body; characterized by self-awareness and self-reflection; experience is ordered through a sense of pattern and form rather than by discrete objects; there is a much deeper appreciation of the alienating power of conceptual language and more active and aware use of imagination and metaphor.(Reason 1994)

More recently, supported by writers such as John Heron (Heron 1992; Heron 1996), Richard Tarnas (Tarnas 1991), David Abram (Abram 1997), Henryk Skolimowski (Skolimowski 1994), Mathew Fox (Fox 1983), and Charlene Spretnak (Spretnak 1991) he takes this further, arguing that:

> The participative worldview stands in contrast to both the positivist paradigm with its mechanical metaphors which underlies the modern worldview, and also the various forms of relativism which characterize the postmodern metaphor. (Reason 1997)

I am very conscious that my highly selective use of these extracts does not do justice to the power and persuasiveness of the case for such a view. Nevertheless, let me

make it quite clear that I am nailing my epistemological colours to the participative mast. My knowing emerges from my participation in and from my relationship with "other." As you read on, I think you will agree that this quality permeates the text. In particular, you will find it exemplified in *Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise)* in my imaginary dialogues with Jack Whitehead, Peter Reason and Judi Marshall, my tutors at CARPP.

You will also see the developing participatory nature of my learning as I engage in actual (as opposed to imaginary) dialogues with Jack Whitehead throughout the process of writing the thesis. In the early stages of our supervisory relationship I was frightened of being overpowered by what I saw as Jack's superior knowledge and intellect and I reacted by containing him/them within the metaphor of an anvil – on which to forge my own ideas[4]. Now, as the thesis nears completion, I am better able to articulate my notion of *living inquiry.* I no longer need the security of this metaphor and I allow myself to respond more fully to Jack's invitation to engage in mutual learning. Our relationship has become more dialectical in the sense of being both oppositional and interdependent. I began as a novice researcher "thinking against" Jack's notion of living (educational) theory whereas the mutual interplay of later supervision sessions and correspondence suggests a more collegial sense of "thinking with" and learning from each other.

Multiple epistemologies

As John Heron says: "Worlds and people are what we *meet*, but the meeting is shaped by our own terms of reference" (Heron 1996). Furthermore, because I encounter "worlds and people" in many different ways, I have many ways of knowing.

Many writers have argued for the existence of, and need for, different ways of knowing and forms of knowledge. Peter Reason and Bill Torbert outline their own typologies and summarise others including schemas developed by Jurgen Habermas (instrumental, practical and emancipatory), Ken Wilber (emotional/soulful, rational/theoretical, and intuitive/spiritual), Peter Park (representational, relational

[4] See section entitled: *Imaginary Friends* in *Chapter Three: Postcards from the Edge*

and reflective) in their review article, *Towards a Transformational Social Science* (Reason and Torbert 2001). Although aware of their existence, I have drawn little inspiration from most of these sources. I have found Bill Torbert's "four territories of experience" useful in conversational moves (framing, advocating, illustrating and inquiring) but am otherwise put off by his (to me) frequently impenetrable language.

There are, however, two frameworks that have significantly influenced my own thinking about multiple epistemologies. The first of these is a feminist analysis of "women's ways of knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy et al. 1986; Goldberger, Clinchy et al. 1987) which opened my eyes both to the gendered nature of knowing and to the underlying epistemological growth metaphor of "gaining a voice." With Carol Gilligan (Gilligan 1993) they challenge the predominantly masculine assumption of psychological development as a journey towards greater autonomy, independence and abstract thought, contrasting the development of attributes "typically associated with the female: interdependence, intimacy, nurturance, and contextual thought" (Goldberger, Clinchy et al. 1987). Their research with a group of 135 women revealed five major epistemological perspectives; Silence, Received Knowledge, Subjective Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge, and Constructed Knowledge.

As I read the accounts of their interviewees, I found myself resonating with aspects of each of these perspectives but identifying most strongly (through what I describe as my *living inquiry*) with those women who told the researchers that:

> Their current way of knowing and viewing the world – the way of knowing we call *constructed knowledge* – began as an effort to reclaim the self by attempting to integrate knowledge that they felt intuitively was important with knowledge and methods of knowing that they had learned during their formal education... They described the development of a new way of thinking that emphasized not the extrication of the self in the process of knowing but a "letting the inside out and the outside in" (Ibid. p216)

I want to stress that my attempts to construct my own forms of knowledge represent an aspiration rather than an achievement. It would be insensitive, untrue, and stereotypically male to claim this most developed of "women's ways of knowing" for

myself. Rather, I express my gratitude for the pioneering work of feminist scholars that (as some acknowledge) increases the range of possibilities for both women and men.[5]

The second influential framework, which I see as complementing rather than competing with the above, is the fourfold model of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowing developed and widely used by John Heron and Peter Reason (Heron 1992; Reason 1994; Heron 1996; Reason 1997; Reason 1999; Reason and Torbert 2001). I have known of this model and worked with it consciously in various aspects of my inquiries since reading about it in *Feeling and Personhood* (Heron 1992) shortly after publication. Though it is from Reason and Torbert (Reason and Torbert 2001) that I draw the following brief descriptions of the four forms of knowing. There is evidence of each of them in all the chapters relating to the four main strands of inquiry in this thesis but I will restrict myself here to a few examples.

> Experiential knowing means direct encounter, face to face meeting: feeling and imaging the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. It is knowing through participative, empathic resonance with a being, so that as a knower I feel both attuned with it and distinct from it. It is also the co-creative shaping of a world through mutual encounter. Experiential knowing thus articulates reality through inner resonance with what there is, and is the essential grounding of other forms of knowing.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of this form of knowing is my encounter with spirit during the ritual men's retreat at Gaunt's House. In *The Men's Room*, I allude to the quality of this knowing through narrative, sculpture and poetry but its essence is, and will remain, tacit and ineffable.

> Presentational knowing emerges from and is grounded on experiential knowing. It clothes our encounter with the world in the metaphors of aesthetic creation. Presentational knowing draws on expressive forms of imagery, using the symbols of graphic, plastic, musical, vocal and verbal art-forms, and is the way in which we first

[5] I am far from the first male Action Researcher to express such views. See, for example, Winter, R. (1994). "The Relevance for Action Research of Feminist Theories of Educational Development." Educational Action Research **2**(3): 423-426.

> give form to our experience. These forms symbolize both our felt attunement with the world and the primary meaning it holds for us.

There are many instances of such knowing in the text. Perhaps the *enso*, the Zen circle, in *Healing Journeys* with which I seek to represent something of the qualities of "transformative space" will suffice as an example.

> Propositional knowing is knowing in conceptual terms; knowledge by description of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. This kind of knowing is expressed in statements, theories, and formulae that come with the mastery of concepts and classes that language bestows. Propositions themselves are carried by presentational forms – the etymologies (e.g. language as tongue-ing), the sounds, or the visual shapes (e.g. topology) of the spoken or written word or number – and are ultimately grounded in our experiential articulation of a world.

It seems to me fitting (as I indicated in *Postcards from the Edge*) in any branch of human inquiry, and particularly when mining one's own experience, to theorise sparingly and make modest claims to knowledge, and then only on the basis of a substantial process of inquiry. Given that stricture, my attempt to articulate the contributory features of *A Ritual for Separation* is a clear example of propositional knowing.

> Practical knowing is knowing how to do something, demonstrated in a skill or competence. It presupposes a conceptual grasp of principles and standards of practice, presentational elegance, and experiential grounding in the situation within which the action occurs. It fulfils the three prior forms of knowing, brings them to fruition in purposive deeds, and consummates them with its autonomous celebration of excellent accomplishment.

It is not easy to demonstrate a skill or competence directly in a written thesis (other than the skill of writing) so, I might direct your attention to the tape recording of my presentation *The Future for Men at Work* at the *Women and Men: Working Together for a Change* conference as indicative of my competence in communicating my learning about men and masculinities to a large audience.

John Heron (Heron 1992; Heron 1996) generally shows the relationship between these forms of knowing as an up-hierarchy, arguing for the primacy of practical knowing as the consummation of other forms of knowing whilst being grounded upon them. Although following the logic of this argument, I think it can be taken to valorise agency and action in the world as opposed to communion and being in the world and would be happier to endorse a greater equality between them. Thus, I prefer his more complex "medicine wheel" diagram[6] to the more commonly used pyramid diagram[7] though, paradoxically, I do share his sense of the need for a solid experiential base as a well-spring for sense-making and action. Ultimately, I agree with Reason and Torbert (Reason and Torbert 2001) when they conclude that:

> What is most important is simply the acknowledgement that there are multiple ways of knowing and the further development of one's research/practice... with a commitment to engaging and interweaving more than one mode of knowing.

In light of this, I shall move on to consider some of the qualities of my own participatory/extended epistemology as practised in my *living inquiry.*

My ways of knowing

As is apparent in the narratives of my inquiries into my life as a man, my conduct in loving relationships, my search for healing and my practice as an educator, my knowing ranges freely across the four domains of John Heron's "manifold" model. For the most part, my sense-making follows its own path rather than the well-worn track of prescriptive cycles though, over time, one can detect an underlying pattern – an ebb and flow of action and reflection. Within this pattern, I claim that my ways of knowing exhibit certain qualities that, taken together, might be said to represent their distinctive signature.

The first of these qualities is the significance I attribute to personal knowledge. I mean this in the sense that Michael Polanyi used the term to account for tacit

[6] See Heron, J. (1992). Feeling and Personhood. London, Sage. Figure 8.1 (p158)
[7] See Ibid. Figure 8.3 (p174)

knowing, for our capacity to know more than we can tell (and incidentally to be able to tell more than we can write). In *Knowing and Being* (Polanyi 1969) he puts it this way:

> It would indeed be self-contradictory if knowing included a capacity to specify completely what we know. But if all knowledge is fundamentally tacit, as it is if it rests on our subsidiary awareness of particulars in terms of a comprehensive entity, then our knowledge may include far more than we can tell.

I also agree that a commitment to personal knowledge has significant ethical implications for how I use my knowledge. Thus, again with Michael Polanyi (this time from *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy)* (Polanyi 1958):

> [I have decided]... that I must understand the world from my point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising his personal judgement responsibly with universal intent

This is not to say that I seek to make sweeping generalisations from my own experience. The logic of *living inquiry* is not inductive. Rather, my knowing rests on the power of the particular. I believe that I influence and am influenced less by the transfer of abstract principles and more by the evocative power of stories of lived experience. This credo is well expressed in a remark attributed to Carl Rogers[8] that, when you travel to the unique heart of a person you find yourself in the presence of universal truth.

A second quality is that my knowing is often metaphorical or imaginal. I write about this aspect of my inquiry process at some length in *Postcards from the Edge*[9] and acknowledge my intellectual debts to James Hillman's work in the field of Archetypal Psychology (Hillman 1983; Hillman 1983; Hillman 1996) and to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson for their groundbreaking work on the metaphorical basis of language and mind (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Rather than repeat myself, I can perhaps best make my point by offering a fresh example of this way of knowing in the form of a

[8] Quoted in Reason, P. and B. Goodwin (1997). Complexity Theory and Co-operative Inquiry. University of Bath Unpublished Paper.
[9] See section entitled *Imaginary friends*

poem I wrote shortly after a ritual men's retreat in March 1996. At dusk, on a wonderfully snowy day, alone in the darkness, each man entered Jordas' Cave – an ancient site used for initiation since Viking times. The spirit of the legendary giant Jordas is reputed to inhabit an underground waterfall which serves as an oracle.

There are many ways to enter the cave,
In supplication, in awe, in fear
Of meeting its millennial inhabitant - for
This is the home of Jordas the Viking.

Soul-tired and wearied by my life's journey,
Seeking a new direction, longing to be different
Yet fearful of change, not knowing in what
Direction to turn, I have come for guidance.

Turning my back on the grey skies, I return
To the earth's womb in prayerful silence,
Groping my way round the dark chamber
Onto the stone lip of the oracle.

Water crashes into the pool at my feet,
Spraying unseen droplets in the blackness.
His spirit enters me and I grow taller, until
My body outreaches the crystal waterfall.

"Jordas, in the name of Father Odin.
What is my purpose? Give me courage
To know the truth. Give me ears to hear,
Eyes to see and a heart to receive you"

I know that he has heard my question
And that my answer is waiting outside.
It is snowing as I leave the entrance to
Climb the rock-strewn hill behind the cave.

Following the beaten track, criss-crossed
By footprints, I feel the urge to strike out
To walk in virgin snow, to find my own path.
And, doing so, realise that this is Jordas' answer.

My true purpose is to find my own path.
It will take many steps (not just one leap).
Sometimes with others, sometimes alone,
Each step needs judgement, truth and courage.

To mark this moment and bless my journey
I anoint my head with water from the icy stream.
It is time I stopped pretending to another's crown
It is time for me to become king in my own realm.

A third quality of my knowing is that it is deeply embodied in my being and doing in the world. By this I mean both that my sense-making draws upon rich veins of experiential knowing and that it directly affects my practice (as a man, friend, lover, parent, healer, policeman, writer, storyteller and educator). I think this is evident from the range and depth of my experiential inquiries and from my accounts of how my practice has changed (and is changing) in all of these fields. I try to embody the values of authenticity, integrity and joy and an ethic of care for others in my daily living. I judge myself by these standards, knowing that I often fall short in my behaviour and strive to improve my practice, driven by a sense of myself as a "living contradiction" (Whitehead 1993). This is particularly clear in *Reshaping my Professional Identity* where I present accounts of my educational practice since 1988, showing how it has developed in response to my core beliefs about people, my educational values and my understanding of a healthy educative relationship.

Fourth, my knowing is complex and emergent. I am using the word "complex" to distinguish it from "complicated." An Atlas rocket with over five million parts is complicated – it can be disassembled into its constituent parts and reassembled into the same rocket using a linear logic, first A, then B, then C, etc. The relationship between the three astronauts depicted in the film Apollo Thirteen was complex – innately unpredictable, susceptible to exponentially divergent behaviour and self-

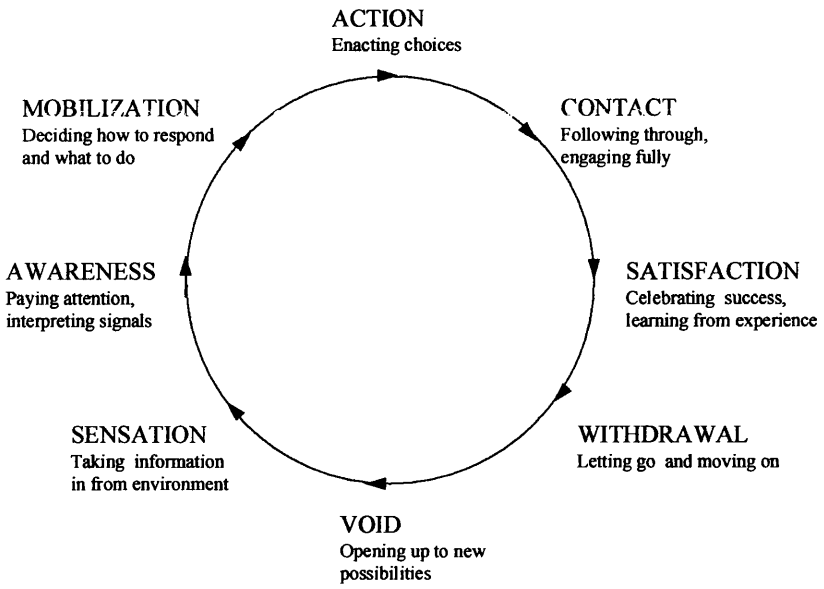
created in, and by, a non-linear system. My knowledge of complexity theory is merely that of the informed lay-person but it strikes me as an important (and relatively new) metaphor for knowledge creation in the field of human inquiry. Sense-making in a complex environment has less to do with controlling variables and predicting outcomes than with noticing the emergence of new patterns of meaning – watching where the arrows land rather than aiming for a target. Jon Kabat-Zinn puts it beautifully in *Wherever you go, there you are*[10] when he says:

> Inquiry does not mean looking for answers, especially quick answers, which come out of superficial thinking. It means asking without expecting answers, just pondering the questions, carrying the wondering with you, letting it percolate, bubble, cook, ripen, come in and out of awareness, just as everything else comes in and out of awareness. Inquiry is not so much thinking about answers, although the questioning will produce a lot of thoughts that look like answers

Fifth, and linked to the above, my knowing is also characterised by uncertainty and unknowing. I am using these words in a micro and macro sense to denote both the dissolution of old patterns of understanding to let new patterns appear and my willingness to step into the void – whether that of being buried alive at Gaunt's House, of leaving my wife and family, of exploring the healing potential of "transformative spaces", or of reshaping my professional identity. I am influenced here by my training in Gestalt psychology, which premises an eight phase cycle of creative adaptation to our changing environment.

This is shown in graphic form in the figure below, which first appeared in my Gestalt Diploma Paper (Mead 1995b) adapted from a version by Petruska Clarkson (Clarkson 1989). New meaning emerges during the "contact" phase, but all phases are integral to the process of knowledge creation. It is in the void of "unknowing" that new possibilities for sense-making arise.

[10] Quoted in Benz, V. M. and J. J. Shapiro (1998). Mindful Inquiry in Social Research. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage. (pp38/39)



The Gestalt cycle of creative adaptation

Murray Stein, whose book *In MidLife: A Jungian Perspective* (Stein 1983) has been a frequent source of inspiration to me, uses the term "liminal space" to describe this void and offers Hermes as our archetypal guide at such times:

> Liminality, Hermes' home, occurs: when the ego is separated from a fixed sense of who it is and has been, of where it comes from and its history, of where it is going and its future; when the ego floats through ambiguous spaces in a sense of unbounded time, through a territory of unclear boundaries and uncertain edges; when it is disidentified from the inner images that have formerly sustained it and given it a sense of purpose. (p22)

My own experience as a mid-life inquirer (as I described myself in the *Prelude*), some of it presented in my stories of *living inquiry*, lends support to his statement:

> At midlife a person runs into a period when the liminality that is produced by external facts such as ageing, loss of loved ones, or the failure to attain a dream of youthful ambition combines with the liminality that is generated internally by independent shifting intrapsychic structures, and the result is an intense and prolonged experience of liminality, one that often endures for years.(pp49/50)

As I approach the end of researching and writing my PhD, I feel my energy being drawn back out into the world and sense that, for the time being at least, I am leaving the liminal space of midlife behind me.

There is one further quality of my knowing, one that has pre-occupied me throughout the writing of this thesis, and that is my attempt to balance and integrate mythos and logos – two distinctly different forms of sense-making, two modes of thought which, I will argue, are reflected in the university's twin criteria for the award of a PhD: originality of mind and critical judgement. In the closing paragraphs of the *Prelude* I voice my intention to use both my creative intuition and my capacity for conscious structuring[11] to bring *mythos* and *logos* together in ways that keep the mythic element fresh and the logic clear. As the writing has progressed, I have kept this intention to the forefront of my mind, exploring possibilities for creative encounters between imagination and reason, determined to honour equally both forms of sense-making. This is such an important dimension of my epistemology (with such substantial implications for issues of validity) that I want to look at it quite closely.

As a starting point, let me both define and demonstrate what I mean when I use the terms mythos and logos. First a lexical definition from Gisela Labouvie-Vief whose exploration of this issue in *Psyche and Eros: Mind and Gender in the Life Course* (Labouvie-Vief 1994) has greatly enriched my understanding of how this duality might eventually be bridged:

> Western intellectual tradition has brought us a separation of two aspects of mind and self. On one hand, there is the realm of *logos* – the realm of logic and objectivity, of all that can be stated in terms of rational truths, of our hope that life can be reduced to laws that are mechanical and precise. On the other hand, there is the realm of *mythos* – the realm of all that is felt and organic, of that which is private and imaginative, of all that appeals to the inner world of emotions, of our tendency to leap out of the constraints of analytical precision and to seize the novel. (p1)

[11] Borrowing these two phrases from the introduction to Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf* Heaney, S. (1999). Beowulf. London, Faber and Faber. (pxi)

I will return to Labouvie-Vief shortly, but before I do so let me offer a contrasting and complementary mythic representation of these two realms with an extract from a poem by Frederico Garcia Lorca[12] entitled *Home From A Walk*:

> Assassinated by the sky,
> between the forms that are moving toward the serpent,
> and the forms that are moving toward the crystal,
> I'll let my hair fall down

I first came across this poem at a workshop run by Noel Cobb in 1994 and was struck instantly by the images of the crystal and the serpent as archetypes of the fixed and the formless, of the sharp, lucid power of logic and the shadowy, sensuous mystery of the imagination. A few days later, I painted this picture of a snake encircling a piece of crystal as an attempt to bring them together.

Labouvie-Vief traces the history of this dichotomy in the Western mind from the pre-Athenian Greek myth of *Psyche and Eros* to the present day and challenges the predominantly masculine model of the "vertical mind" in which logos is privileged above mythos. Instead, she draws on Jungian notions of *animus* and *anima* to suggest the possibility of a "playful dialogue between different forms of knowing and ways of being" (Labouvie-Vief 1994). Thus:

[12] From Bly, R. (1973). Lorca and Jiminez: Selected Poems. Boston, Mass., Beacon Press. (p145)

> The concept of an integration of logos and mythos, often personified by the image of the marriage of the masculine and the feminine...offers an important new metaphor for the mind and its development (p14)

As I read more widely, I find these ideas reflected in other fields including cognitive psychology, linguistics, philosophy, and anthropology. I refer several times in this thesis[13] to Guy Claxton's book *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind* (Claxton 1997). He shows how the sense-making process of our conscious intelligence differs from the slow knowing of our unconscious intelligence. The former, which he also calls *d-mode*, "sees conscious articulate understanding as the essential basis for action, and thought as the essential problem-solving tool" (p7). Whilst the latter, a slower mental register, "is often less purposeful and clear-cut, more playful, leisurely or dreamy" (p2). Both, he argues, are essential and each has particular strengths but it is the cultivation of *tortoise mind* that encourages the growth of wisdom and insight. This is what I am speaking of in my email exchange with Peter Reason (in *Questions of scope*) when I refer to "just knowing" – "I do, I notice. I mull. I wait, and I 'know'" – though I do have the grace to admit that sometimes I "know" wrong and sometimes I don't "know" at all.

Another psychologist, Jerome Bruner alludes to the same dichotomy of mind in his classic article *Two modes of thought* (Bruner 1988) when he says:

> There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another. Efforts to reduce one mode to the other or to ignore one at the expense of the other inevitably fail to capture the rich diversity of thought. (p99)

And he gets to the heart of the implications this has for questions of validity when he paraphrases the views of contemporary American philosopher, Richard Rorty:

> Perhaps Richard Rorty is right in characterizing the mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy (which, on the whole, he rejects) as preoccupied with the epistemological

[13] See, for example, *Postcards from the Edge*

> question of how to know truth – which he contrasts with the broader question of how we come to endow experience with meaning, which is the question that preoccupies the poet and the storyteller. (p100)

In a similar vein, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) from the field of linguistics, identify opposing "myths of objectivism and subjectivism" arguing that both have value and that neither is a sufficient explanation for the qualities of human understanding.

> The fundamental concern of the myth of objectivism is the world external to the individual. The myth rightly emphasizes the fact that there are real things, existing independently of us, which constrain both how we interact with them and how we comprehend them... What legitimately motivates subjectivism is the awareness that meaning is always meaning *to* a person. What is meaningful to me is a matter of what has significance for me. And what is significant for me will not depend on my relational knowledge alone but on my past experiences. (pp226/227)

Bemoaning the either/or mentality that sees it as impossible to encompass both at once, they offer a third perspective, a possible transcendence of the duality, which they call the "experientialist myth." They call the logic of this third position *imaginative rationality* and define it loosely in terms of its "interactional properties." They fall short of articulating a full-blown "participative worldview" but provide a useful linguistic grounding for its subsequent development.

In their own way, all these writers identify and describe the complementary worlds of mythos and logos but the radical anthropologist Hugh Brody (Brody 2001) goes much further when he suggests a plausible explanation for the origins of these two forms of sense-making in the different lifestyles of hunter-gatherer and farming communities. The archaeological evidence seems to show conclusively that hunter-gatherer communities were the cradles of humankind and that the development of agriculture (followed by our industrial and post-industrial societies) is a relatively recent phenomenon. Brody, who has lived and worked among surviving hunter-gatherer peoples for thirty years, believes that the practice of farming required a different logic relying on new forms of sense-making:

> The skills of farmers are not centred on their relationship to the world but on their ability to change it. Technical and intellectual systems are developed to achieve and maintain this as completely as possible. Farmers carry with them systems of control as well as crucial seeds and livestock. These systems constitute ways of thinking as well as bodies of information. The thinking makes use of analytical categories that are independent of any particular geography, and not expressive of any given set of facts. (p255)

How different this form of knowing is from that of the hunter-gatherer:

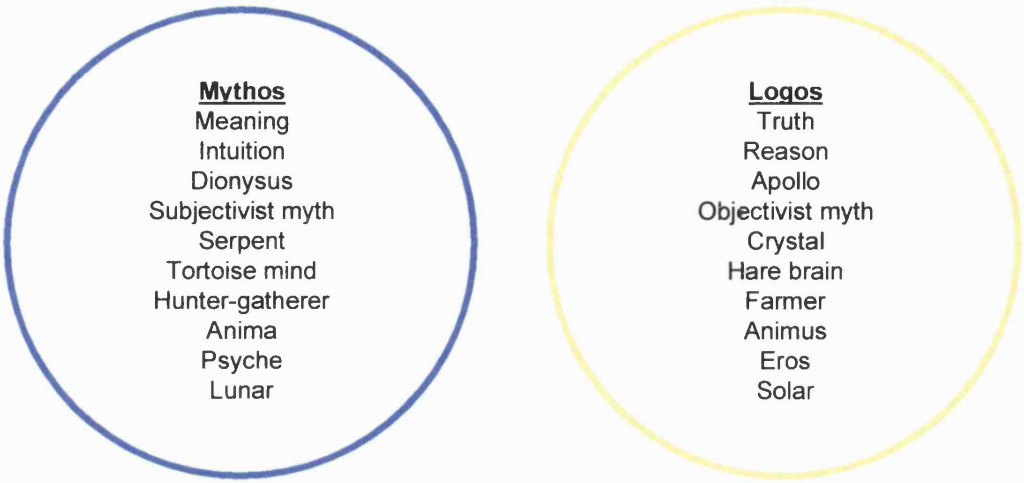
> Hunter-gatherer knowledge is not dependent on absolutism or dichotomies. It is inductive and intuitive; its conclusions emerge by allowing all that has been learned to process itself. Reasoning is subliminal, and therefore has the potential to be more sophisticated, more a matter of assigning weight to factors, than can be the case with linear logic. It is a way of gaining and using knowledge that also seeks for continuity and renewal. (p269)

Even though I do not live close to the land, by temperament I am an epistemological hunter-gatherer. This way of knowing, so readily dismissed by "civilised" people, lies deep in my bones and demands expression alongside the logic and the propositions of rational argument. Brody too recognises our capacity to access both forms of sense-making:

> Yet these different ways of thought are, as potential, within everyone. Human beings can reach into themselves and find two versions of life, two ways of speaking and knowing. Internally, many people are torn between these two ways. Individuals are born into one or the other society, and therefore to learn its particular skills and disposition; but nobody is born to *be* either. The potential for language, and therefore for thought itself, is a shared human characteristic. (p307)

To summarise: there is considerable support from many disciplines for the existence of two complementary categories of sense-making, which I typify as mythos and logos. I have gathered together some of the contrasting qualities of these two worlds in the diagram below. The lists are neither comprehensive nor definitive – and I am conscious that by categorising them in this way, I am following a logocentric mode.

For a further imaginative exploration of these two worlds, one could not do better than to read D.H.Lawrence's poem *Snake* and Italo Calvino's short story *Crystal* or David Wade's fascinating inquiry into the interaction of energy and organisation in nature and art *Crystal and Dragon: The Cosmic Two-Step.*[14]



Some contrasting qualities of mythos and logos

Maybe it is possible to synthesise these into a third form of knowing. Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) suggest that it can be done through the "experientialist myth" and I think that "relational" and "participatory" knowing are also groping towards this possibility. In my *living inquiry* I embrace both these forms of sense-making and wonder if, perhaps, they come together when the gate is unlatched and we pass between worlds: in those "aha" moments that unlock old patterns of understanding and behaviour and open up new meanings and thus new possibilities for choice and action.

Complexity theory suggests that autopoesis, self-generated creativity, occurs at the boundary between order and chaos. Mythology offers Hermes as the messenger between Psyche and Eros. As an action researcher, I can explicate my embodied knowledge through narratives of inquiry and practice. At the very least, it seems to

[14] See, respectively: Lawrence, D. H. (1972). Selected Poems of D.H.Lawrence. London, Penguin. Wade, D. (1991). Crystal and Dragon: The Cosmic Two-step. Bideford, Devon, Green Books. Calvino, I. (1993). Time and the Hunter. London, Picador.

me that an inevitable challenge for those of us working in the field of human inquiry is to find ways of doing justice to all our ways of knowing - and to offer distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity to substantiate our claims to knowledge and meaning.

Questions of validity

As I turn to address these issues, I can hear a clamour of conflicting questions from Jack Whitehead, Peter Reason and Judi Marshall, my tutors at CARPP "What are the values that underpin your living inquiry? asks Jack. "How do you determine and define rigour and discipline?" says Peter. "Can you articulate the qualities and practices of your inquiry process?" queries Judi. "Wait a while," I reply. "These are good questions and I will return to them [15] but if I am to be congruent with what I have said about the need to offer distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity then I must first explain them in my own terms."

I think of *living inquiry* as creating the form of my life. By "form" I mean the shape, colour and texture of my life. Striving for "good form" means striving for congruence between the substance of my life (my sense of purpose, identity and ethical values) and its appearance (my actual behaviour, my being and doing in the world). In this sense, living life as inquiry also means living "artfully" with an aesthetic appreciation of quality and fitness for purpose. This metaphor also allows me to look critically at my life, not to find fault but as an art critic might, to deepen and enrich my understanding. From this perspective, I claim the following attributes for my *living inquiry.*

Breadth and Depth: The former is evident in the many roles and parts I play in my life; son, lover, father, friend, storyteller, healer, policeman, educator, consultant, researcher, writer, artist, poet, traveller, homemaker, cook, sailor and Morgan sports car enthusiast! My interests are wide-ranging and I have consciously inquired into many aspects of my life. Honouring this diversity is important to me and I was not prepared to take the easier route of focusing this PhD on a single area. In terms of

[15] And do so in *Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise)*

the latter, researching and writing this thesis over the past five years, I have deepened my inquiries considerably in some areas: in menswork, storytelling and leadership development, for example.

Duration: I have sustained my inquiries over time. Now fifty-one, I have been consciously living my life as inquiry since my mid-thirties. I marvel at my longevity (my father died at twenty-eight) and middle age is bringing me the opportunity to follow the tracks of some of my inquiries over many years. The four major strands of inquiry in this thesis are still significant aspects of my life. I am working with a small group of men researching positive masculine role models for leadership. My children have returned to the centre of my life (particularly Tom, whose recently diagnosed disability makes my loving attention even more important). I am collaborating with a woman friend, Jules to run a "Healing Journeys" storytelling workshop in September. And I am currently preparing the material to train and supervise the facilitators of nine Action Inquiry Groups for the Public Service Leaders Scheme. In all these areas, my energy is moving out to engage collaboratively with others.

If these attributes, breadth, depth and duration might be said to represent the "extent" of the work of my *living inquiry* then perhaps the following attributes might be said to represent its "merit."

Experiential Grounding: As an integral part of my being in the world, my *living inquiry* is firmly anchored in the bedrock of my experience. This goes much further than being a "reflective practitioner." I have actively sought new experiences and pushed my boundaries considerably in doing so, whether it be ritual menswork, separation and divorce, storytelling performances, or creating and delivering large-scale educational programmes for the police and other public services. In Gestalt terms, I have enriched the "field," the ground from which new figures (*gestalten*) emerge. Without such experiential grounding, I believe that action research remains as speculative and "theoretical" as its reductionist cousins. A life well-lived will be rich in experience and, with reflection, as Dewey[16] tells us, rich in experiences too.

[16] Dewey, J. (1958). Art as Experience. New York, Capricorn Books.

For it is reflection that differentiates the continuous flow of experience, identifying and giving coherence to what is significant.

Passion and Reason: I find that my *living inquiry* flourishes when open to both the zest of passion and the guiding hand of reason. If you will allow me, a favourite quote from Kahlil Gibran:[17]

> Your reason and your passion are the rudder and sails of your seafaring soul. If either your sails or rudder be broken, you can but drift, or else be held at standstill in mid-seas. For reason, ruling alone, is a force confining; and passion, unattended, is a flame that burns to its own destruction. Therefore let your soul exalt your reason to the height of passion, that it may sing; And let it direct your passion with reason, that your passion may live through its own daily resurrection, and like the phoenix rise above its own ashes.

John Heron might refer to these two modes of inquiry as Apollonian and Dionysian. I think we would agree that both have potential merit and that the limitations of each become apparent in the absence of the other. What I am concerned about here though, is simply to make it clear that, in living my life as inquiry, I embrace both my passion and my reason.

Courage: Living and inquiring are risky enterprises requiring moral and, occasionally, physical courage. There is the constant risk of loss of the comfortable and the familiar as our *living inquiry* challenges and transforms the questions we live by, forcing us to "unlearn" the old in order to move into new ways of being and doing. It takes courage for me to push my experiential boundaries, and to put so much of myself into the public domain in this thesis. It even takes courage to write like this, addressing you from my centred "I" for, as you judge this work, you are judging me too.

Living life as inquiry means being willing, on occasion, to "feel the fear and do it anyway," to step forward when you would rather hang back or to "stand in the fire" when you would rather run away. Peter Reason speaks somewhere about the need

[17] Gibran, K. (1926). The Prophet. New York, Alfred A Knopf.

for magnanimity, greatness of soul, and I think that courage is an element of this.

Change and Transformation: I think of change as differences in outward form (doing different things) and transformation as an inward shift in our being (doing things differently). Both are essential attributes of *living inquiry*. The narratives of inquiry and practice in this thesis reveal some of the significant changes and transformations in my life. The writing of this thesis itself has been an initiatory process, an opportunity to discover the project of the rest of my life – and a timely one too, as I prepare to leave the police service next year, to earn my living as a consultant, writer, storyteller and educator. My personal and professional identity has been reshaped during this period. I have learned to love myself and thereby love others. I am becoming an elder, am healing the split between animus and anima in my self. I am learning the transformatory power of storytelling and I increasingly see myself as an educator whose purpose in life is to help people "unlatch the gate" for themselves.

Self-generated Creativity: Coupled with change and transformation, is the question of claiming our own originality. *Living inquiry* is an innately creative process, drawing upon the gift of imagination and teaching us to value our unique creativity. At the highest level, my self-generated creativity is expressed in the evolving "form" of my life and, within that, through individual and shared acts of creation – from parenting to painting and poetry. It also means not just resisting the "crippling mutilations of objectivist thought," but also claiming the right (within bounds) to live the life I choose. I recognise that is an extravagant claim but I exaggerate to make the point that we can too easily allow convention to become a straitjacket thereby denying our existential responsibility for our own lives and blaming others for the limits we place on ourselves.

As I say this, I can hear Jack Whitehead laughing gently at my frequent protestations that "I am not doing another bloody living educational theory PhD" whilst simultaneously soaking up his ideas and influence. Yes, you could frame my *living inquiry* in those terms – but I need to forge my own thesis on the anvil of my own lived experience.

Reflection and reflexivity: Socrates, on trial for his life before the court at Athens, declared (according to Plato) that "the life which is unexamined is not worth living." *Living inquiry* both demands and generates a substantial degree of self-awareness. Some of this comes from interaction with others, words spoken in love, puzzlement or anger; comments from co-inquirers; insights from therapy; and some from solitary reflection on experience. I have sought to extend my awareness of "the ground upon which I am standing" and to bring that reflexivity into my research and writing. To the extent that I know them, I have laid bare my biases for your perusal. I imagine that reading this thesis from your own perspective, some of my "blind spots" will also be apparent to you and I welcome your constructive feedback. Sometimes I wish that I could translate more of my contemplative self-awareness into what Bill Torbert calls "consciousness in the midst of action" (Torbert 2000) though, paradoxically, I spent years in Gestalt therapy "losing my mind and coming to my senses" in order to develop a more spontaneous and less self-conscious way of being.

Relatability: I am using this word in a similar way to Michael Bassey (Bassey 1995) who uses the term *relating* to indicate that although situations may differ, the research findings resulting from the study of a singularity may still be of interest to others if there are sufficient similarities for the situations to be related to each other. He contrasts this with *generalising* which assumes that situations are so similar that research findings can be directly transferred and applied by another. I argue in the *Introduction* and in *Healing Journeys* that it is the personal and the particular – not abstract generalisations – which enable us to relate to each other and to connect with the universal. Mine is a passionate and personal text that makes no claim to speak for another - yet I believe that it does speak to the human condition. I think there are times too when my stories connect with archetypal themes – as in *The man who lived as a king*[18] – and assume "mythic resonance".

Textual Quality: Writerly conceit demands a well-written thesis. As I say in the *Prelude*, my aim is to create a text that is interesting and enjoyable. I strive for an open and accessible style in which my meanings are clear and the images rich and evocative. If you find the text difficult or dull to read then I will have failed. I agree

[18] See *Healing Journeys*

with author Barbara Tuchman [19] that "The writer's object is – or should be – to hold the reader's attention..." and like her "I want the reader to turn the page and keep turning to the end." In seeking to convey aesthetic, emotional and spiritual dimensions of meaning I have not confined myself to conventional (academic) prose. Thus assessing textual quality must also include a judgement about the appropriateness and effectiveness of the many "alternative forms of representation" (Eisner 1993; Eisner 1997) – drawing and painting, photography, sculpture, poetry, creative "freefall" writing and the spoken word – that are also integral to the text.

Epistemological Balance: This quality is demonstrated by the extent to which my different ways of knowing are acknowledged and represented in the text. In particular, I am concerned to redress the conventional academic imbalance between (undervalued) *mytho-centric* and (valorised) *logo-centric* forms of sense-making. I declare myself to be an "epistemological hunter-gatherer" by temperament but strive to integrate and synthesise *mythos* and *logos*, seeking to create transformative spaces in which we can "unlatch the gate" to unlock old patterns of understanding and behaviour and open up new meanings and possibilities for choice and action. As I say in the *Prelude*, it demands "a combination of creative intuition and conscious structuring" to keep the mythic elements of the thesis fresh and the logic clear.

Critical Judgement: Whilst originality of mind is an obvious dimension of several of these attributes, the quality of critical judgement demands further consideration. The application of critical judgement is implicit in the "conscious structuring" of the text and embodied in the choices I have made in many aspects of my *living inquiry* – particularly in developing my practice as an educator. However, as the author of a PhD thesis I need make this explicit by using these very attributes as standards of judgement to critically evaluate my own text. I do this by adding a critical commentary to each of the four narratives of inquiry: *The Men's Room*, *Postcards from the Edge*, *Healing Journeys*, and *Reshaping my Professional Identity.*

[19] Barbara Tuchman, *New York Times,* Febrary 2, 1989. Quoted in Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of Inquiry. Handbook of Qualitative Research. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage: 516-529.

There is much more that could be said here about validity. It seems to be an obsession amongst action researchers: a "fertile obsession" (Lather 1994) for some, a "futile obsession" for others.[20] I am unapologetic about my claims for the legitimacy of *living inquiry* in the academy and have offered my own standards of judgement and practice, not as definitive canons of validity but as exemplifying the qualities and practices of my inquiry process. These standards are embodied in the narratives of *living inquiry* running through the whole of this thesis. They have evolved over many years, are partial rather than comprehensive, and provisional as opposed to definitive. They are ontological and epistemological standards that guide my living and inquiring self.

Let me settle for these attributes. There may be more [21] but twelve is enough to be going on with. These are the attributes I am choosing to claim for my *living inquiry.* When framed as questions (i.e. to what extent are these attributes actually present in how I live my life as inquiry) they can also be considered as standards of judgement and criteria of validity to substantiate my claims to knowledge and meaning. There are others but I think these probably constitute the distinctive standards and criteria for my *scholarship of living inquiry.*

Questions of method and position

As I begin to draw this chapter to a close, I am conscious that I have yet to "position" my *living inquiry* in relation to the wider fields of Action Research and Human Inquiry. I see this as an important aspect of reflexivity, being aware of the ground upon which I stand as a researcher. I shall attempt to articulate my contribution to an emerging scholarship of inquiry by acknowledging some intellectual debts and claiming originality for some features of *living inquiry*, rather than by means of a comprehensive literature review.

[20] See, for example, Judith Newman's challenge to the whole notion of validity in action research in Newman, J. M. (1999). Validity and Action Research: An Online Conversation.
[21] For example, see *The space between* for a discussion of "ironic validity" which though relevant, I do not consider to be a distinctive attribute of my *living inquiry.*

Perhaps the first thing to say is that I find the whole idea of "having a position" quite problematic. I recall a slightly surreal conversation on this subject with a fellow delegate at an academic conference on *Gendering Management Learning* at Manchester University last year (2000):

> "What is your position?" he queried.
>
> "I'm sorry, I don't understand what you mean," I replied.
>
> "Well," he said, with some asperity. "I'm a pro-feminist, post-structuralist. Don't you have a position?"
>
> "No," I said. "I don't think so."
>
> "Do you think you might have one when you have finished your PhD?" was his tart response.
>
> "I hope not," I shrugged and turned away.

I was surprised by how important it seemed to my interlocutor to be able to claim membership of a particular and clearly labelled academic "club" and I admit that my responses were somewhat teasing if not downright disingenuous. Now, as I face the prospect of submitting my thesis to the academic judgement of internal and external examiners who may not accept my frames of reference, I am more sympathetic.

However, I still think that identifying oneself so closely with a narrow philosophical or methodological school of research is unhealthy and self-limiting for any scholar. In contrast, my work is characterised by philosophical inclusivity and methodological promiscuity. Let me expand these points as I seek, not to establish a single fixed position for my *living inquiry*, but to acknowledge a variety of affiliations and influences.

First: I lay claim to the appellation "research" using Lawrence Stenhouse's meaning of "systematic inquiry made public"(Stenhouse 1980). Although, as I said elsewhere in the text, it can take many years for the underlying systemic patterns of my *living inquiry* to become apparent. I embrace both Apollonian organisation and Dionysian

energy though, as I describe in the *Prelude*, I have come to adopt the metaphor of Eleusinian inquiry (based on the myth of Demeter and Persephone) to connote its slow cyclical processes and alternating seasons of visible growth and subterranean hibernation (Otto 1955).

Second: My *living inquiry* is a form of action research. Not in any narrow technical sense of the term but within the broad definition that Jack Whitehead offered, during a supervision session in February 1998: "making sense of your present practice through an evaluation of past learning with the intention to create something better than exists at the moment". I have seen many other definitions and frameworks to describe action research but none that expresses its essence so pithily. I am an action-researcher too, because I am a practitioner-researcher, equally committed to developing understanding and improving practice. I am not interested in (nor convinced by) research about people that purports to be objective or detached.

At the *viva voce* examination on 22nd March 2002, my examiners asked me to make it quite clear to the reader that the thesis itself enacts a form of Action Research. As described in the *Introduction*, writing about my inquiries involved a sustained and rigorous process of action and reflection through which each chapter of the text was subjected to my own and others' appreciative engagement and critical judgement.

After this period of learning through the writing, came a subsequent phase of learning from the writing (described in *Interlude I*) as I engaged in a three-month long correspondence with my supervisor Jack Whitehead and other CARPP colleagues about the draft, which resulted in a re-ordering of the thesis, the addition of critical commentaries to each of the narrative chapters, and a deeper and more precise understanding of the nature and significance of the contribution it makes to an emerging scholarship of inquiry.

The final phase has been one of learning through the process of preparing for and undergoing *viva voce* examination by Donna Ladkin and Professor Helen Simons, during which I have learned to articulate and defend my thesis in terms of appropriate standards of rigour and its contribution to knowledge.

Third: Picking up this point, my *living inquiry* is clearly situated within the wider field of Human Inquiry. I like this term and the meaning that Peter Reason gives it (Reason and Rowan 1981) as "about people exploring and making sense of human actions and experience". I am also happy to acknowledge the influence of its ethos of "doing research with people, not on people" on my own research practice, whether it be inquiring "with myself" or "with others". Human Inquiry too, promotes a fundamentally inclusive and participative view of action research. It is a broad church that encourages dialogue between different methodological approaches and welcomes a multitude of techniques, forms of sense-making, and ways of knowing.

Fourth: As a form of research, my *living inquiry* constitutes the study of a "singularity". Sometimes I inquire with others, and I showed in *Questions of scope* how I traverse first-, second-, and third-person research, but this thesis is essentially an account of my own learning. I am neither a case study nor a sample of one. I make no claims to inductive generalisations. There are no average people and I cannot reduce my learning to probabilities or otherwise transfer it to you, though perhaps my stories of *living inquiry* may resonate with and support your own "will to meaning". I think this is very close to what Michael Bassey has to say about studying a singularity:

> A singularity is a set of anecdotes about particular events occurring within a stated boundary, which are subjected to systematic and critical search for some truth. This truth, while pertaining to the inside of the boundary, may stimulate thinking about similar situations elsewhere (Bassey 1995, p111).

As a storyteller too, I have learned that the universal wisdom of stories lies in the power of the particular and in our ability to empathise and identify with "other".

Fifth: Since Thomas Kuhn popularised the notion of scientific paradigms in the 1960's (Kuhn 1962), it has become fashionable to speculate about the possibility of a new worldview, even a "new age". As traditional positivist scholarship has come under attack, research practices have multiplied and fragmented to the point where scholarly discourse has, all too often, been "balkanized" (Donmoyer 1996) into separate and competing camps unwilling to acknowledge the value and validity of any

approach other than their own. I hope that my *living inquiry* avoids the worst of these excesses, though I would be naïve to claim that it is entirely non-paradigmatic, having already "nailed my epistemological colours to the participative mast". I do not want to reify *living inquiry* as yet another school or method of research – I assume that we each have our own forms of living inquiry and I have no desire to establish mine as any kind of orthodoxy.

Sixth: Methodological promiscuity does not mean doing sloppy research. Rather, it means that I draw on many different approaches without wedding myself to any of them. Thus, in my narratives of *living inquiry*, you will see that I have adopted (and adapted) ideas[22] from, amongst others, action inquiry (Torbert 1991), co-operative inquiry (Reason and Rowan 1981; Reason 1988; Reason 1994; Heron 1996), narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly 2000), naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985), mindful inquiry (Benz and Shapiro 1998), living educational theory (Whitehead 1993), and living life as inquiry (Marshall 1999; Marshall 2000), as well as creating original forms through storytelling and "transformative spaces".

There is also a serious methodogical point about refusing to be constrained or confined by particular research methods which I was delighted to find articulated in Paul Feyerabend's provocative polemic *Against Method* (Feyerabend 1975). Arguing for a pluralistic and counterinductive approach to science as a practical necessity, he says:

> There is only one principle that can be defended under *all* circumstances in all stages of human development. It is the principle *anything goes*. (pp18/19)

I invite you to judge my *living inquiry*, not in terms of my adherence to any particular method, but by the unique constellation of qualities and practices that together constitute my inquiry process.

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[22] See *Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise)* for a more detailed discussion of ways in which I both draw upon and push at the edges of these approaches to realise my own *scholarship of living inquiry*

Seventh, and finally: I claim that this thesis contributes to an emerging scholarship of inquiry. In doing so, I am building on the ideas of two distinguished scholars, Donald Schon and Ernest Boyer. In a paper written towards the end of his life, Schon (Schon 1995) considers the "new forms of scholarship" presented by Boyer in his *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer 1990) and argues that:

> ... if the new scholarship is to mean anything, it must imply a kind of action research with norms of its own, which will conflict with the norms of technical rationality – the prevailing epistemology built into the research universities (p27)

He describes three new forms of scholarship envisaged by Boyer in addition to basic research, which he labels the *scholarship of discovery.*

- The *scholarship of integration* – putting isolated facts into perspective, making connections across disciplines
- The *scholarship of application* – applying knowledge responsibly to consequential problems
- The *scholarship of teaching* – transmitting, transforming and extending knowledge

To these, I would add another – the *scholarship of inquiry*, in which the focus is on living the questions rather than seeking answers. My *living inquiry* contributes to this form of scholarship through my openness to experience, creative and imaginative forms of representation, appropriate and well-grounded theorising, and action to improve my personal and professional practice.

My originality of mind has enabled me to bring living and inquiring together as an integrated practice and to synthesise *mythos* and *logos* as forms of sense-making and aspects of my being.

My critical judgement has enabled me to engage critically with my own experience, with narratives of my inquiries and with the ideas of others to create and apply my own distinctive standards of judgement and practice to substantiate my claims to knowledge and meaning as I live my life of inquiry.

Furthermore, I have committed myself to *living inquiry* as a lifetime practice within which I have, for the past fifteen years or so, explored questions such as; How can I live well as a man in the world? How can I enter more fully into loving relationships? How can I find healing for body and soul? How can I exercise my (educative) influence for good?

These are eternal questions to which there are no ready answers and ones, I venture to suggest, worthy of a life lived as inquiry.

Interlude I

Learning from the writing

8th September 2001

In the three months that have passed since I thought I had completed my thesis, I have discovered that beyond learning through the process of writing, another level of learning was waiting for me – that of learning from the writing. In recent weeks I have been reading and rereading my own text and engaging in lively face-to-face debates and email dialogues with Jack Whitehead, Moira Laidlaw and other "critical friends". This has enabled me to stand back from the text somewhat as I address the question: What does living my life of inquiry mean for the communication of my learning?

This question has opened up some significant new perspectives on my work. Responding to it encourages me both to embolden my claims about the significance of my thesis and to apply my critical judgement more explicitly to my narratives of inquiry. I understand more now about the particular contribution I am making to an emerging scholarship of inquiry whilst also realising that my original text needs some amendments and additions in order to communicate my learning about *living inquiry* more effectively.

I outlined some of these changes to the form of the thesis in the *Introduction* where I speak about "folding the text back on itself". By placing a chapter on the purposes, scope, epistemology, validity, methodology and position of *living inquiry* at the front of the thesis (even though it was – and could only have been – written after subsequent chapters) I can now invite you, the reader, to join me as I revisit my narratives of inquiry to trace the emergence of the distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity which are articulated in the opening chapter. In this way, I hope to clarify the meanings of these standards, not just linguistically, but as they are embodied in my developing practice (as a man, in loving relationships, as a healer and as an educator). The need for this became quite apparent during a supervision session with Jack on 1st September (2001) when he pointed to a section of the original draft of

Living Inquiry (now amended) in which, speaking of a possible "third place" where *mythos* and *logos* meet, I said:

> I do not want to reduce this mystery to a set of propositional value statements. Jack, it is not my intention to be dismissive of your suggestion to explicate my values but, right now, I would rather honour this mystery than try to explain it. [1]

As I turned the page I could see that I had then summarised my standards of judgement and criteria of validity in a series of twelve, blunt, bullet-pointed, propositional statements. The obvious dissonance between my declared intention and my actual behaviour in listing the statements in this way caused near-hysterical laughter. I could see how, out of the context in which they emerged, this "vulgar" listing of criteria [2] represented a violation of my own aesthetic judgement of my life of inquiry as a work of art. I was reminded again of the quotation from Lyotard that, much earlier, I had referred to when writing *Interlude II: The space between*:

> The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done.* (Lyotard 1984 p81)

It would be quite misleading for me to pretend that I constructed my thesis in accordance with a set of pre-established rules. I was only able to synthesise my distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity for *living inquiry* in hindsight. However, I can now return to my narratives of inquiry to trace the emergence of these standards and criteria and clarify their meanings in practice. In doing so, I am conscious of a subtle but important distinction between my *living inquiry* and Jack's notion of *living theory* (Whitehead 1993). In the latter, our embodied values (defined as those human goals for the sake of which we do things) are considered to be the primary source of motivation. Thus, they are assumed to have explanatory power in relation to the nature and direction of our inquiries. I do not deny that such human values play an important part in shaping our lives but, as I say in *Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise),* I find myself less guided by concepts of

[1] See – *Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise)*
[2] Gregory Bateson makes this point in the concluding dialogue of his book *Mind and Nature* Bateson, G. (1988). Mind and Nature. New York, Bantam Books.

social values than by the mysterious voice of my soul – intimations, intuitions, insights and a kinaesthetic sense of rightness or "fit". Where I agree with *living theory,* and why I think it is important to revisit my narratives of inquiry, is that our distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity both emerge from and shape our practice. The dialectic of action research requires another iteration – a further level of reflection – to apply these standards and criteria to my own text.

In order to make the application of my critical judgement quite explicit, and in order to avoid disrupting the flow of the text with excessive and intrusive interpolations, I have decided to append separate commentaries to each of the four narrative chapters: *The Men's Room, Postcards from the Edge, Healing Journeys* and *Reshaping my Professional Identity.* In these commentaries I shall focus on what I am learning from the writing about my life of inquiry and how that relates to the twelve distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity outlined in *Chapter One: Living Inquiry.* It would be tedious and repetitive to address all twelve in each commentary so I will narrow the focus to those that seem most relevant in each case.

Returning now to the particular contribution I am making through this thesis to an emerging scholarship of inquiry, my conversations with Moira Laidlaw have clarified my sense of why I think *living inquiry* matters so much. I believe that, in living my life of inquiry, I have brought together the personal and the professional, the inner life of the psyche and the outer life of working for good in the world, *mythos* and *logos* in ways that speak to the human condition. In celebrating and affirming my life of inquiry, I am celebrating and affirming the lives of each of us. In speaking for myself I am proclaiming my membership of the human race. In telling my particular story there are moments when it touches archetypal themes to which we can all relate.

In *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* I borrowed the words of psychotherapist and educator Carl Rogers [3] to describe this phenomenon: "When you travel to the unique heart of a person you find yourself in the presence of universal truth." Rereading my text I have come to think of these narrative epiphanies as the place where ontology,

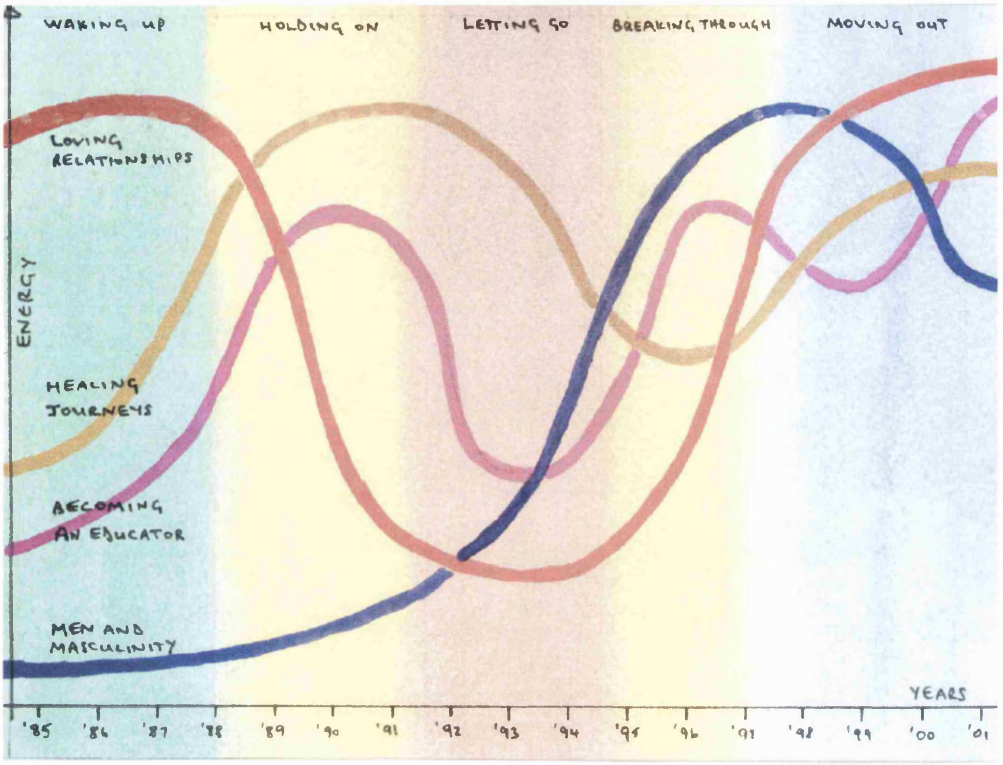
[3] Quoted in Reason, P. and B. Goodwin (1997). Complexity Theory and Co-operative Inquiry. University of Bath Unpublished Paper.

epistemology and cosmology meet and have coined the term *mythic resonance* to characterise this quality. This goes beyond making an aesthetically engaged and appreciative response to a story (D'Arcy 1998), it involves seeing oneself present in the story of another and seeing that story present in one's own life of inquiry. I think we all have such stories to tell and in *Healing Journeys,* when describing a workshop on storytelling as meaning-making and community-building that I ran at Bath University in March 2000, I offer some examples of this same quality in other people's stories.

Rereading my own thesis has helped me to a more holistic appreciation of my life of inquiry and encouraged me to share the story of *Jumping Mouse* as a meta-myth for *living inquiry.* Although many fragments of stories, poems and images were already woven into the fabric of the text, I wanted something to represent the whole and have interpolated the telling of *Jumping Mouse* in the context of *Healing Journeys*, where it belongs – at the very heart of the thesis. It is a telling (to be heard) rather than a text (to be read) because listening opens up a qualitatively different imaginative space, one that I hope will stimulate your connection with this mythic story in a way helps you relate [4] to my own story of *living inquiry.*

In the past few weeks I have also been able to "read across" my narratives of inquiry, searching for patterns and relationships between them. I experimented with forms of creative representation that might reveal some of these connections and eventually traced the chronological development of each of the four major strands of inquiry over the period 1985 to 2001 using my subjective judgement of the energy I put into each of them. Having drawn and redrawn these lines half a dozen times until satisfied with the result, I combined them in a single multi-coloured graph to see the overall effect. The result was a complex curvilinear pattern, within which I can perceive several phases (recognising that these are personal constructs arising from my own will to meaning).

[4] I mean relate in the sense that educational action researcher Michael Bassey uses the term, in contrast to generalisation, to signify an intuitive recognition of the relevance of something beyond the boundaries of a particular source (which he calls a singularity).



I have labelled these phases intuitively: they reveal to me the reawakening of my inquiring spirit in my mid-thirties (*Waking Up*) and the way my inquiries into self-healing – through therapy – and my role as an educator sustained me as my marriage descended into misery and despair (*Holding On*). There followed periods when even they were not enough (*Letting Go*) and when inquiring into my masculine identity – through men's work – pulled me through (*Breaking Through*) to renewed levels of inquiry in other areas including loving relationships, storytelling, educational action research, even writing this PhD (*Moving Out*).

I do not want to labour this thematic approach or to extend it beyond the point of useful insight, so I include the diagram to show the overall pattern rather than any detailed analysis. Looked at askance and imagined in three dimensions, it is not too difficult to see a rather shaky DNA-like double helix stretching across the page and I like this metaphorical image of inquiry as the stuff of life. *Living inquiry* indeed.

Chapter Two

The Men's Room[1]

> For me there is only the travelling on paths that have heart, on any path that may have heart. There I travel, and the only worthwhile challenge is to traverse its full length. And there I travel looking, looking, breathlessly. (Castenada 1970)

About ten years ago, I first realised that I needed to (re)discover what it means to be a man. I had already spent five years in Gestalt therapy, confronting the demons of a lost and lonely childhood, and I knew it was time to move on. That process had given me much and I had become increasingly aware of my confusion about male identity. I knew (or at least I thought I knew) I was a man – but what did that mean?

Tentatively at first, I began to explore this question; joining a men's group, reading, going on workshops and men's retreats. As I became more and more involved, I co-founded a collaborative inquiry into Men's Development in Organisations, wrote about the subject and was invited to speak at several conferences. In hindsight, I can frame all these activities as part of my "living inquiry" – though at the time I simply did what I was drawn to by curiosity, passion and personal necessity.

What I offer you here is a form of autoethnography, a "messy text" (Denzin 1996) of epiphanal moments shaped by my desire to convey intimations of my lived experience. With Denzin, (ibid, p33) I do not assert that any text actually represents an external reality nor do I presume that any form of representation is ultimately anything other than what it is – a form of representation. I also follow his dictum (ibid, p40) that:

> ... [Such] a text should show, not tell. Talk about what something means to the other should be kept to a minimum. A minimalist text is saturated with theoretical understandings, but it does not announce or parade its theory.

[1] This is an intentionally ironic and provocative title reflecting my desire to redefine and reclaim legitimate spaces for men's development in contrast to the exclusive, anti-feminist *Men's Room* of old.

Last year I had a shock when a men's development workbook called *Navigator* was published (Traeger, Daisley et al. 1999). I had coached the primary author, James Traeger for about two years as he wrote the first draft of the book and had forgotten that, at some point, he had asked me to write about my own experience of men's development. The shock came as I opened *Navigator* and found what I had written offered as an example to other men under the title *Geoff Mead: A path with heart.* I shall reproduce it here verbatim because it is a succinct formulation of my views and because it contains some pretty substantial public claims about what I have learned/am learning from this inquiry. In writing the rest of this chapter (and indeed elsewhere in the thesis) I shall be offering some evidence to substantiate those claims whilst also recognising that I sometimes fall short of achieving them.

Geoff Mead: A path with heart

I am now 47 and I first got involved in personal development about 12 years ago when, whilst working as a chief superintendent in the police force, I became fascinated by inter-personal communication and relationships. Courses on facilitation, mentoring and consultancy opened up a new and sometimes confusing world of feelings. I felt that I had previously been living my life in two dimensions, in black and white.

Perhaps precipitated by this awareness, a crisis in my marriage led me into relationship counselling and then individual Gestalt therapy. Later I attended some events for men and joined a year-long men's group which met for a total of about twenty days in "wilderness" locations, far removed from everyday life. I am currently a member of another men's group. This time it is self-organising and comprises about eight men, all in our forties and early fifties. These experiences have been influential for me in a number of ways:

- To find a solid sense of my masculinity that is grounded in my own life and values, not from popular macho culture.
- To gain a new outlook on work and life based on what I truly want for myself, not based on the desire for other's approval. This is hugely empowering.
- I now relate differently to other men; more open, loving and accepting of who they are, less competitive and fearful. This includes developing a real friendship with another man for the first time in my life.

- I am less confused in my dealings with women – better able to distinguish between friendship, love, intimacy and sex, and less reliant on women for emotional and physical support.
- I now recognise and honour my own creativity in painting, poetry, prose and dance. We are all creative beings, I believe – all it takes is a little faith and courage. My living space is decorated with my own pictures and objects.
- I am living a life with more integrity and authenticity. I am developing a sense of who I am in the world, and accepting my unconditional right to be. This leads to trouble sometimes with others, such as my wife and family.
- I am opening myself more to the universe, and I am beginning to make contact with my own spiritual nature. This is a source of wonder and puzzlement as I seek a form of practice in which to enact and explore this side of my life.

I am sure there are many other ways in which my involvement with personal development and Menswork has affected me. I feel I am on a never-ending journey through my own life. I do what I must to survive and thrive. I feel that I walk with a stumbling gait, making mistakes and experimenting, learning how to walk a "path with heart" and not settle for the "famished road"

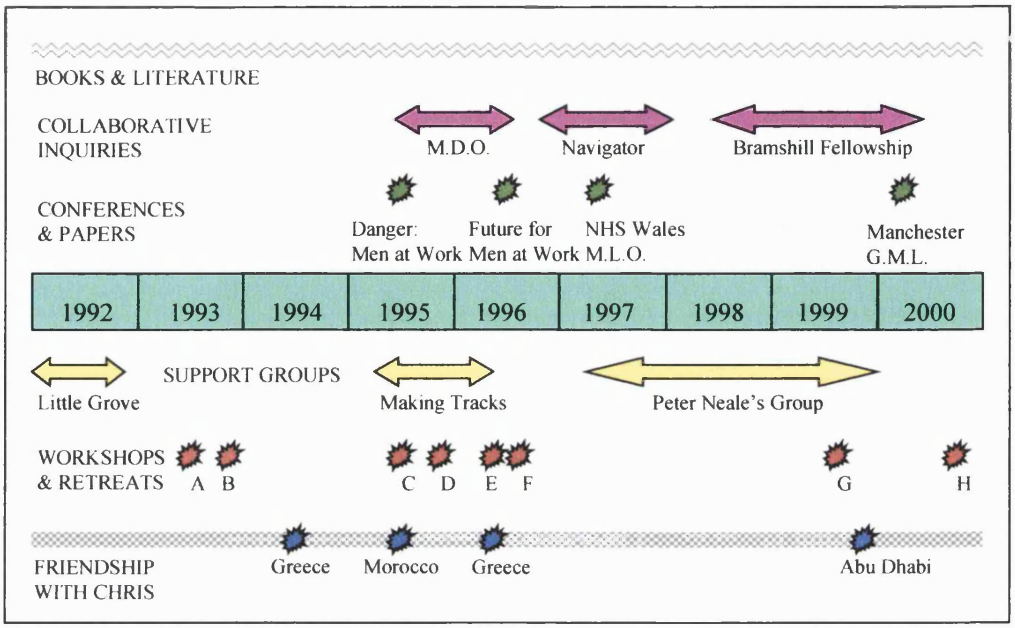
A map of my inquiry

What were these experiences that I claim to have such an influence? In the following sections I call upon a selection of them to illustrate what, in hindsight, I am claiming to be a significant personal inquiry into men and masculinity.[2] But before doing so I want to offer you a chronological framework laying out the various layers and elements of the inquiry – a map offering some signposts to the subsequent texts.

The diagram overleaf shows something of the complexity, depth and duration of this multi-faceted inquiry. Over time, one can see movement back and forth between the experiential, presentational, propositional and practical realms – but not in any obviously systematic or cyclical form. What I believe I have done, more or less, is to

[2] In doing so, I am aware that the luxurious logic of hindsight is often not apparent amidst the pragmatics of the moment. A remark attributed to Soren Kierkegaard expresses it better: "Life must be remembered backward, but lived forward."

value and pay attention to all these aspects of inquiry, in ways that support and inform each other.



The Men's Room

KEY TO WORKSHOPS AND RETREATS

A – Odin and the Way of Wyrd
B – Childhood's End *
C – Fathers Day
D – Meeting the Giant
E – Rites of Passage
F – In Search of Spirit *
G – Journeyman (Stories for men)
H – Autumn at Hazel Hill

Those marked thus * are referred to in this chapter

I claim to be a reflective practitioner (and practising reflector). This is a messy, inchoate business, which allows me to make rich and unexpected connections between many different elements. Donald Schon, author of *The Reflective Practitioner* puts it thus:

> When a practitioner reflects in and on his [sic] practice, the possible objects of his reflection are as varied as the kinds of phenomena before him and the systems of knowing-in-practice which he brings to them. He may reflect on the tacit norms and

> appreciations that underlie a judgement or on the strategies and theories implicit in a pattern of behaviour. He may reflect on the feeling for a situation that has led him to adopt a particular course of action, on the way in which he has framed the problem he is trying to solve, or on the role he has constructed for himself within a larger institutional context. (Schon 1983) p62

But even this inclusive description implies a degree of consciousness foreign to my reflective practice. I mix and mull the ingredients, allowing them to soak in my unconscious and occasionally seek to give them shape through writing and speaking at public events – in Guy Claxton's terms (Claxton 1997) giving my "tortoise mind" time to process them thoroughly so that my "hare brain" can give them expression. I move between experience, reflection, proposition and practice as opportunity, time and interest dictate.

Sometimes, as in the Hertfordshire Action Inquiry Group I do engage in more systematic inquiry but, for the most part, inquiry is simply part of the flow of my life. Thus, the following texts are narratives of neither victory nor ruin (MacLure 1996) but stories of living inquiry. They are partial and incomplete and the untold stories are legion. How might my ex-wife and family have written about all this gallivanting around the countryside as I went off to yet another conference or retreat, leaving them to fend for themselves? Very differently, I imagine.

I shall begin with two accounts of men's workshops and retreats – *Childhood's End* and *In Search of Spirit* – which occasioned dramatic and memorable shifts in my understanding and behaviour. I have also selected them because they gave rise to spontaneous and powerful representations in verse, prose, image and sculpture. As Elliot Eisner suggests (Eisner 1993; Eisner 1997), the evocation of such spiritual and aesthetic values requires us to go beyond conventional texts. Perhaps their "truths" can only be expressed in "artistically rendered forms" though they are "true" also in the sense that they are faithful to my recollection and perception of events themselves.

Childhood's End

In November 1993, I took part in a two-day men's workshop at Monkton Wyld, a community-run residential centre in Dorset near Lyme Regis. It was the first such event I had attended and I recall driving along the coastal road full of trepidation, not knowing what to expect and wondering whether to turn back. My fears proved groundless. I found a group of men as eager as me for a deeper, richer relationship with their peers. We shared many personal confidences in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. At dusk on the second evening we made a bonfire on the beach and burned images we had previously made of aspects of our lives that we wanted to let go of. A few days afterwards I wrote this poem, *Childhood's End.* As you read the poem and look at the picture that follows it, I invite you to judge them, not as literature or art, but as expressions of spiritual and aesthetic values. By including them in my thesis I am seeking to evidence my claim to honour my own creativity and I am struggling to convey the personal impact and imaginative qualities inherent in these forms of menswork.

Eleven men gather on the narrow strand
And walk in silence, as dusk chills the breeze
Until we (for I am one) find our sacred place
Between the crumbling cliff and the lapping waves.

For fire there, within a circle of stones,
Tumble-down branches and driftwood are stacked.
A cairn is raised at the water's edge,
Moored to the fireplace by a stone causeway.

Our altar made, it is time to prepare ourselves.
The sea draws our eyes through the gloaming.
We sit (or stand) and stare at the rising tide
Each man bowed and deep in thought.

We touch old wounds and feel their present pain.
Our stories have been told and we are living now

In this eternal moment and boundless space.
It is time to put down the burdens of the past.

I light the kindling with an elemental spark.
Flames caress the wood and leap into the sky,
A beacon of hope to men adrift on the sea of life,
Fire to warm the heart and cleanse the soul.

With trembling hands and new-remembered love
I burn the images of a lost and lonely childhood.
"Goodbye Dad - it's an old story. Let it go."
Then I watch as others take their turn.

Joy wells up from deep inside and sounds
Deep healing notes that bind us to the earth.
Our song breaks into dancing, yelling, cavorting,
Capering, running and splashing in the waves.

Yes! yes!! yes!!! I am alive. I am a man.
No longer just a boy, my father's son
And I am lighter, taller, full of me,
Passion bursting into a firework display.

Our madness spent, we gather round the fire
In quiet comradeship and mutual respect.
This night has brought us unexpected gifts
And it is time to take them home.

We return along a different shore,
Light-hearted now and chattering
Eleven men united by an uncommon ritual
And the experience of our common humanity.

A loving presence tugs at my heartstrings
And I turn toward the now distant fire.
In the shadows I can see a twelfth man,
My long-dead father - dancing there.

A week or so later, I was seized with the desire to make a visual representation of the events and did so using pastels. It was virtually the first picture I had made since my early schooldays (I had always told myself that I could not draw) but the image of the fire ceremony demanded expression and, seven years on, I am still surprised and delighted by its quality and power. The original hangs on my wall at home and, with a turn of my head, I can see it now as I write.

In search of spirit

A narrative this time, describing an initiatory ritual at a men's retreat at Gaunt's House in 1996. These events affected me so deeply that four years passed before I was able to write about them, other than scribbled notes in my journal at the time. The following account was written in February this year (2000) during a period of convalescence as I delved into the nature of my own spirituality and its relationship to my creativity. I will let it speak for itself.

In July 1996, my friend Richard Olivier asked me if I would like to be a mentor/small group leader on a residential men's retreat at Gaunt's House, to be lead by Michael Meade (American storyteller and group leader) and Malidoma Some (West African shaman). I was delighted and, having participated in many men's events over the previous three years, felt ready to take on a leadership role of some kind.

The group leaders and mentors came together at Gaunt's House on Wednesday in the late afternoon – some twenty-two of us. That evening we built a sweat lodge for ritual purification. After three or four rounds I came out and stayed with my friend Peter Neall who was feeling a bit ropey. The cool night air on our naked bodies was like a healing balm. A quick dip in the open air (unheated) pool shocked us back to full consciousness. We dressed and joined the others for a moonlit barbecue.

The next day we drummed and sang before choosing an element (earth, fire or water) to work with. Instinctively, I chose earth (or did she choose me?). We spent most of the day building our shrine. We heaped sieved earth into a cone shaped mound two to three feet high on a level base some eight feet by four feet. Then we decorated it with ash, some yellow leaves, an antler and some candles. Some of the men had spent the day reaching deep inside themselves to retrieve appropriate sacred language to describe the elements. This is what was written about earth.

> Earth embraces life, welcoming, holding, and comforting. Fecund earth nourishes the weary soul. It is the womb of community that gives relief and offers homecoming to the battle-scarred and the outcast.
>
> Earth accepts like a bear, loving and gentle with her cubs, but harbours a fierce strength that can shrug off opposition with ease. Earth's ever-forgiving heart heals our belonging and remembers our identity. Earth can sting, or sing of heavy places of gravity and hidden things.
>
> Ancient earth has the capacity to contain abuse and agony, transmuting them into abundance and opportunity.

As the rest of the men (eighty-one in all) arrived for the retreat we formed clans around each shrine, further choosing, by lot, membership of a small group. The earth

clan had three such groups, to the second of which Steve Banks and I were appointed as mentors/co-leaders:

> Touching the ground of spirit
> The longing of the outcast
> The root of memory

As evening drew on, we gathered round Michael and Malidoma to meet and greet one another in song, drumming and dance. Michael told the first part of a long story, which he was to thread through the whole weekend.

The following day, Friday, followed a similar pattern... talking, drumming, dancing, listening to the story and connecting with the particular energy of our chosen element/clan. Michael lead the earth clan in an Australian Aboriginal "stomping" dance, chanting and thumping the earth with our bare feet. By nightfall, each clan had prepared a ritual based on their own element for the whole community.

First came the fire dance... the fire clan began with a whispered chant, louder... louder... LOUDER... moving gently like a candle flame, then like a crackling bonfire, then a raging inferno... They moved among the rest of us, sweeping us up into the frenzy... yelling, shouting, sweating until we could dance no longer and our energy gradually subsided into the embers of the fire, glowing with remembered passion. Without the containment of the drumbeat, such fierce male energy could easily become violent – but it did not. To feel the heat of other men... to allow oneself to burn fiercely in their company, yet to be safe, was tremendously enlivening.

After that, we were ready for the water ceremony. All the men went out into the night and were lead by members of the water clan to a bower of leaves and branches they had constructed. Each man went through alone, along a water-filled trench towards the light of a hundred candles illuminating the shrine. As we entered, our feet were bathed and dried by another member of the clan and we joined the others, sitting, kneeling and lying round the shrine, singing a lullaby. Many of the men wept freely in each other's arms. The water seemed to cleanse us of our accumulated griefs and we encountered each other with love and compassion. How different from the

fire energy... and how nourishing too, in its own way. That men can help each other find healing is a precious thing...the loving father, the good brother is present in all of us.

By this time it was getting late and, eventually, our collective energy shifted away from water towards earth... the great mother. We of the earth clan formed a human funnel leading to our shrine. We danced the "stomping" dance we had learned earlier that day and chanted together. Someone drummed the rhythm. We danced together, then each man danced his own dance, supported by the rest. Each man then took his moment to dance down the funnel towards the shrine and, as he approached, was held by two members of the earth clan, spun round and tipped over backwards, caught in mid-air and lowered headfirst to the shrine where his forehead was daubed with ash to honour the earth from which we came, to which we belong and to which we will all return. The energy was joyful... a deep contentment and a sense of connectedness to the earth, and with each other. That night I brought my bedroll down to the shrine and slept beside it, waking occasionally to pray and tend the candles.

The next day, Saturday, we gathered after breakfast to continue the story and, then, to prepare for the great ritual to follow. Michael and Malidoma (an initiated shaman of the West African Dagara people) had decided to follow the earth energy. The whole group was allocated tasks connected with their element. On a quarter-acre site within an old walled garden, the earth clan cleared waist-high nettles and thistles and then dug twenty-seven shallow graves radiating out like the blades of a Chinese fan from the great stack of logs and branches collected for the bonfire by members of the fire clan. Around the hearth an area was cleared for drumming and dancing, decorated with leaves and flowers, to contain and shelter the heart of our temporary "village". The water clan prepared the quarter-mile path from the main house, through the woods, to the ritual ground. As we walked along it later that night, each twist and turn revealed some surprising and beautiful decoration; grottoes, pools of water, intricate candlelit shrines.

The work took all afternoon and early evening. We had a late supper then, dressed for the cold of the night to come, we gathered at the edge of the wood whispering excitedly, shuffling together, nerves jangling in anticipation and (for me, at least) fear

of what was to come. By 10.00 p.m. all was ready and we made our way in silence along the decorated path to the bonfire. A single match was applied and, in moments, the fire blazed, ten feet tall, with an intensity such as I have never seen. Streaks of fire flew upwards like dancing sprites... a thousand, writhing tentacles of flame shooting up into the night sky.

The drummers set up their steady beat and we sang... "Azuma – ay – oh"... (Praise be to the earth). Then, several groups of us made our way to the burial ground. Twenty-seven men were interred, heads above ground, pinned down by the weight of heaped earth, each grave sealed with a line of wood ash, each initiate accompanied by a companion who, alone, would decide when they would be released from the pit.

The makeshift cemetery soon echoed to the shouts, pleas and screams of men trying to persuade their companions to dig them out. Some joked. Some sang. Some fell into prayerful silence. Some slept in the embrace of mother earth. For the first part of the night, I kept vigil over Elmer until I judged he was ready to come out. I had no way of knowing his experience. I just waited until he stopped struggling against the weight of earth. It took hours.

Then it was my turn to go in. A man I had not previously spoken to, Charlie offered to be my companion. I stripped down to loose tracksuit bottoms and sweatshirt and lay in the grave that Elmer had vacated. Three or four men piled earth on me, heaping it on my torso and compacting it until I was held firm. Then Michael came by and sprinkled a line of wood ash on the earth from head to toe. It resonated through my body like a cell door being slammed shut and bolted.

My grave was at the apex of the fan, furthest from the village. Although I knew there were men drumming and chanting to support me, their sound faded away and my circle of awareness shrunk to my own body and the patch of black sky above me. I tried to stay calm and take shallow breaths to ease the pressure of the earth pressing down on my chest, but it was not long before my self-control deserted me and, as the pain got steadily worse, I began to beg Charlie to get me out. "No chance, old son," he replied kindly, his face looming briefly above mine.

I cannot make much sense of the next few hours... just remember the rasping pain, panic, pleading and threatening Charlie to: "Get me the fuck out, you bastard"... until, at my absolute nadir, the sky began to lighten and a glorious dawn broke over my head. Some words of Malidoma came to mind: "Spirit comes at the point that you admit that you cannot go on... not that you will not go on... but that you cannot go on... and you go on anyway." I had not understood him at the time, but now I was ready to understand.

I looked up into the blue, cloud-strewn sky and called out... "God help me, I cannot do this... God help me, I cannot do this... God help me... help me," and then a point of complete release when I was ready to die... "God take me... take me... take me now." As I uttered these words, the cloud-shapes swam and three huge figures emerged... three angels, white robes swirling, one male, one female and a child reaching up to them. They covered the sky in a graceful dance and looked down on me, beckoning me to join them. My heart opened and filled with joy. Tears flowed freely, washing my face and ears (being on my back) and I called to Charlie: "Can you see them Charlie? Oh look at them. They are so beautiful." The pain vanished and I lay at peace, breathing easily and pleading with Charlie to let me stay there forever.

Well, he did not let me stay for ever, just another half an hour or so, and then several men dug me out of the ground, helped me to my feet (I could not stand), wrapped me in a blanket and helped me stumble back to the village where the fire still burned and men were still drumming and chanting "Azuma – ay – oh." A cup of hot, sweet tea was thrust into my hands – nothing, before or since, has ever tasted better – and friendly, eager men hugged me and rubbed my limbs back to life. As my strength returned, I took up the chant, dancing round the fire, occasionally looking up to see my "three strange angels" dancing across the sky.

The whole ritual lasted about ten hours, from 10.00 p.m. until about 8.00 a.m. the next day. The fire burned throughout that long night and the drummers never missed a beat. When the last man had been disinterred and "thawed out" we brought the chant to a ringing climax, ending with great shouts of thanks and praise to the elements and the spirits. We trudged wearily back to the main house for breakfast before Michael took up the story, which ended with a splendid wedding feast. I realised that, during

my time in ritual space, I had been a guest at that feast, had been witness to a sacred marriage – the *coniunctio mysterium* - that great act of alchemical soul making. As we made our farewells I begged a few moments to tell Malidoma something of what I had seen. He looked at me through the eyes of his ancestors... "I know," he said. "I can see your spirit. It is shining. You are very beautiful."

I left not knowing what to make of my experience, but knowing that it had been profoundly significant. I had been touched by the divine – or perhaps glimpsed "that of God in me", as the Quakers say. I knew that the experience would stay with me for the rest of my life and I suspected (and hoped) that it would bring about real change. Two months later, I met and fell in love with Alison, my "wild girl", and pitched headlong into the sea of troubles from which I eventually washed up here, in my flat, living alone and truly happy for the first time in my life. Only now, four years later, can I write about what happened, or depict it artistically through poetry, sculpture or painting. Revisiting it, giving it creative expression, confirms its significance and allows me to continue to draw on its power.

Enter my heart you dancing angels
Possess my house; my life is yours

I pause to re-read these accounts. Familiar as I am with them individually, bringing them together in this way prompts me to ask what they are saying collectively and how they contribute to my emerging sense of "living inquiry." As forms of representation (texts) it seems to me that they have something of the quality of "withness-writing" described by John Shotter (Shotter 1999). They are not dialogical texts but were written from within intensely dialogical "living moments." The very act of representational writing (or sculpting or painting) requires some distance from, and a strong connection with and openness to, the original events. There is an excitement – almost a possession by the creative flow - and an energy stemming from the events themselves so that the texts are both original and driven by their experiential source.

In terms of the content, I notice that each of them is grounded in a physical ritual. They begin with a different experience of being in the world. By trusting and following my own process into the abyss of unknowing, I surrender my everyday preconceptions about how things are – and allow myself to be enchanted by the "spell of the sensuous" (Abram 1997). The doors of perception[3] open wide and the barriers that keep me separate from the "more than human world" dissolve. Of course, it is possible to be sceptical; to call these epiphanal moments hallucinations (and it is true that they came out of altered states of consciousness). But I choose to trust the evidence of my senses and give credence to the tacit and embodied knowledge that, in each case, expressed itself through artistic representation.

I say "expressed itself" because that is how I experienced the creative urge to write, sculpt and paint. It was as though the words and images needed to come out. Certainly there is some craft – but my conscious mind acted in service of the deeper and more diffuse mind that is the whole of me. In *Descartes' Error*, Antonio Damasio (Damasio 1994) writes of the "body-minded brain" and I take this as some scientific corroboration of my own understanding of this process.

These events have contributed powerfully to my "living inquiry" but, taken by

[3] I have borrowed this phrase from William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* via Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*

themselves, cannot be said to constitute an inquiry. They provide a solid base of experience and representation but offer little by way of propositional knowing (Heron 1992). Other, more reflective aspects of my inquiry into manhood provided those opportunities and I shall go on now to describe some of these before considering what practical outcomes there may have been.

Ongoing support

Since 1992, I have been a member of three different men's groups and I want to write a little about each of them. I suspect (though I do not know) that the continuity and support they provided was an essential backdrop to the more intense and dramatic experiences of the workshops and retreats. They were also, I am convinced, equally valuable in their own right and thus a significant element of this multi-layered inquiry. I did not keep any systematic record of my involvement in these groups – just occasional jottings in my journal – so what follows is drawn from my present recollection.

There were five of us in the first group, all of us new to menswork. We met half a dozen times between March and December 1992, each time for half a day, at Little Grove in Buckinghamshire. It was the brainchild of a friend, Graham Stickland and friendship with him was the only common criterion for membership – though thinking about it now I realise that we were all connected with management development and organisational consultancy in some way. I guess our age range was about 35 – 45. We managed the group process collaboratively and quickly fell into a pattern of one of us telling stories of their experience of being and becoming a man. It was simple, relatively unstructured and tremendously affirming to be seen and heard lovingly by other men. We were very cautious, exchanging farewell hugs only at our last meeting. It is still hard to identify what I learned from the process – other than a dawning realisation that our different histories as men did not matter and a growing readiness to plunge in more deeply.

It was the possibility of such depth that attracted me several years later to join a programme called *Making Tracks*. This was a closed group of nine men with professional leadership by an experienced facilitator of menswork. The group met for

a total of about twenty days, taken as long weekends, over a fourteen-month period from April 1995 to May 1996. We always gathered in wilderness locations, frequently in Lancashire at Roeburndale – an isolated valley accessible only on foot. We coupled this closeness to nature with storytelling and spontaneous ritual. Four members of the group were gay (one with HIV) and we came from all sorts of backgrounds – social worker, academic, policeman, part-time gardener, librarian, artist to name but a few. Striving to meet the others on the ground of their being was sometimes challenging and always rewarding. I learned much about strength and courage, love and gentleness from straight and gay alike. I learned to trust and accept my own sexuality and to enjoy the friendship and company of men with different sexualities.

The third group was initiated in a similar way to the first; one man (in this case Peter) inviting selected friends to come together for ongoing mutual support. We began in May 1997 as Sara and I were separating and continued until January 2000 when we agreed that the time had come to move on. We rotated the meetings round our various homes on the first Monday evening of the month, taking it in turns to provide food and drink and to suggest a theme for the meeting if we wished. Our style was fairly rambling and discursive, though sometimes a clear focus emerged or one of us expressed a particular need for attention. Occasionally we would meet for a day – to walk or share stories or, perhaps, to make music and sing. Our initial membership of eight shrank to a core of six – all white, in our mid-forties to mid-fifties, all in "mainstream" professional jobs (teacher, management consultant, company director, financial adviser, economist, policeman), all married and all fathers. In those respects, it was very much a peer group. Perhaps because we could identify with each other so easily, I found the group's willingness to acknowledge without judgement – whether of condemnation or commendation – my struggles through separation and divorce a powerful and moving affirmation of my determination to "be myself."

At the time of writing I am reading a wonderfully incisive and insightful book by David Tacey, *Remaking Men* (Tacey 1997) in which he strives to create a synthesis of two major strands in the contemporary men's movement; those of pro-feminist socio-politics and Jungian mythopoetics:

> Men who set out on a spiritual path frequently become anti-intellectual, aggressively opposed to "theory" and committed to a cult of "experience." The intellect and life of the mind are sometimes felt to be part of the "false self" that the male quester is leaving behind in order to achieve "authenticity." (Ibid. p11)

Whilst I acknowledge some sympathy with the "cult of experience," I also value the life of the mind and of the social activist. For me, as for Tacey, it is a question of both/and rather than either/or. In the next sections I shall draw on some of the products of my involvement in several inquiries into men's development, including conference papers and presentations. In doing so I shall consider to what extent I have been able to bring these strands together.

Men's Development in Organisations

I undoubtedly owe a debt of gratitude to Ian Gee (CARPP2) for encouraging me to turn my gaze outward and consider some of the ramifications of men's development in the workplace. Ian and I discovered our mutual interest in men's development when working together at the Office for Public Management (OPM) in late 1994. He had written a pamphlet and was looking to convene a collaborative inquiry on the subject as part of his research for the CARPP Diploma. Up to that point I had only thought of menswork as an "alternative" activity – quite separate from our day to day life in organisations. I eagerly accepted his invitation to help him get the inquiry off the ground.

We began by organising a dinner for about twenty men that we knew; some from my circle of friends in the "mythopoetic" movement, some from his world of business and consultancy, plus some "wildcards." The firm regularly used by OPM catered the meal and I recall the ripples of amusement and bewilderment we caused by insisting on male staff to wait at table. Our intention was to avoid reinforcing the stereotypical pattern of women caring for and serving men, but the message was mixed and some of the women at OPM resented this apparent male exclusivity... What could be going on that women were not allowed to witness?

Most of the dinner guests applauded the idea of a collaborative inquiry into men's development in organisations – recognising the gulf between these two worlds – but did not have the time or inclination to take part. The suggestion was made that we hold a conference with a wider audience to launch the inquiry... Which is how I found myself in June 1995 standing in front of fifty men and women at OPM, speaking on the theme: *Danger: Men at Work.*

I spoke from my own experience of growing up and working in male-dominated environments and of my disappointment with the shallowness of my relationships with other men in the workplace... "I know from my experience of men's groups and a few close friendships[4] that men have an enormous potential to nurture each other. So why do we deprive each other of these gifts at work?" (Mead 1996). I related contrasting experiences of "walking a path with heart" as Director of the Accelerated Promotion Scheme at Bramshill and "the famished road" I found on my return to Hertfordshire.[5]

The audience seemed to share this ambivalent view. So often, the way men behave at work is oppressive, exclusive, life-denying – yet at some time we had all glimpsed the possibility of something better when men were not afraid to express themselves lovingly, inclusively and in ways that were life-affirming. Working in small groups, the conference delegates produced montages of hopeful images, alternatives to the familiar Danger: Men at Work road sign.

In conclusion, I argued that improving relationships between men at work is not just a way of making men feel better about themselves but that it is an essential element of, perhaps even a precursor to, developing organisations in which diversity is welcomed and in which there is genuine equality of opportunity for all; which are ecologically aware and socially responsible – in short, places fit to house the human soul.

The article (Ibid.) that I based on that conference presentation is a good marker of my own development at that point. I knew something was wrong with men's

[4] Eighteen months previously I had attended the workshop that gave rise to *Childhood's End* and had been sailing in Greece with my friend Chris for the first time about a year before
[5] See *Police Stories*

relationships at work and I envisaged something better (two critical elements of action research) but I had no idea what to do about it other than monitor and modify my own behaviour. Re-reading it now, several years later, I notice how tentatively I included myself, relying heavily on the words of others, notably Roger Harrison (Harrison 1987) and James Hillman (Bly, Hillman et al. 1992) to speak for me on critical issues, as though their voices would carry more weight than my own. It has more of the characteristics of "aboutness-writing" than "withness-writing" (Shotter 1999). Nevertheless it was a beginning; the first time I had attempted to articulate my ideas and feelings on the subject to anyone outside my immediate circle of friends.

Following the conference, fourteen men (including Ian Gee and myself) signed up for a year-long collaborative inquiry focusing on the question: "To what extent is the future of organisational effectiveness dependant on men identifying and engaging in gender related development activities?" I did not know quite what to expect; after all, police inquiries are usually aimed at identifying and convicting the guilty party. This time, rather than providing answers, we stayed with the question.

Sometimes I found the looseness of organisation, openness of agenda and "soft-focus" frustrating. But, over time, I began to see different kinds of "product" emerging. Articles appeared in the national press; I found myself quoted admiringly in The Observer (Baker 1996) and gently lampooned in Arena Magazine (Sellars 1996) as the Chief Superintendent who puts "pictures I have drawn myself" on his office walls. Several members of the inquiry wrote papers and spoke at conferences. Richard Olivier's internationally acclaimed workshops on Henry V and Leadership grew out of conversations at those meetings. We shared what we knew about organisational development and conducted a mythopoetic men's workshop in the heart of the Office for Public Management – complete with ritual purification (smudging), music, storytelling and image-work.

I could see that such activities moved our understandings of the question to deeper levels and we were conscious of trying to avoid the stereotypical male pattern of premature closure. This was my first exposure to collaborative inquiry and I was excited by the challenge to conventional professional and academic ways of working

offered by such a holistic process. Indeed, a few months into the inquiry, I followed in Ian's footsteps and applied to join the CARPP programme at Bath.

In June 1996, Ian Gee and I were invited to share a "spot" on the platform at a conference organised by Richard Olivier called *Women and Men: Working Together for a Change.* We each spoke for ten minutes or so about our experiences and learning from the collaborative inquiry group. The title of our session was *The Future for Men at Work.* Ian spoke first and I followed. The session was recorded and I invite you now to listen to the tape. I believe it exemplifies that sense of "withness" propounded by Shotter (Shotter 1999) and which I value so much as an authentic expression of lived experience.

Imagine yourself present in the audience of two hundred men and women in the main auditorium of the Royal Geographical Society. It is the second day of the event, after stormy scenes on the first when men and women, more or less holding their ground, had spoken to each other from the floor about their hurt and anger. I had slept badly and arrived determined to speak from the heart...

TAPE RECORDING – THE FUTURE FOR MEN AT WORK – 12 Minutes

Of course, your listening to the recording of the event *(interesting slip – I typed recoding of the event)* and my re-listening to it are not the event itself. The recording is a lively and graphic representation of the experience, but I am conscious that we are both (reader and writer) responding to what we hear now. As Denzin (Denzin and Lincoln 1994) says:

> Presence in its plenitude can never be grasped. Consequently, presence on a tape or in real life is always elusive, shifting, and indeterminate, and its meanings are never final or clear cut." (p34)

I have listened many times to the recording since it was made a little over four years ago. I wonder what you make of it? Today I notice the nervy, slightly strained quality of my voice and recall some of the tension and excitement I felt standing at the microphone. I sense engagement with the audience, reflected in their laughter and

applause, and I hear the spontaneity of freshly-coined language as I speak from a few hand-written notes, bolstered only by a single quotation from Robert Johnson (Johnson 1991) and Anne Stephenson's poem. I think there is a high degree of congruence between what I am saying and the way I am saying it; I am "showing not telling" (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). I am fully present and vulnerable as I describe my pain at the unspoken conflict between men and women at the conference.

In terms of the content, I am beginning to offer a few examples and suggestions for introducing men's development into the workplace – such as training and development programmes that bring together police and civilian staff, men and women, from different levels of the organisation[6], mentoring schemes and other ways of supporting a culture of self-development. These activities are not labelled as menswork or men's development but they cut across hierarchical norms and patriarchal values. I express the hope that, by these means, men at work (and men in power at work) will re-examine and re-evaluate their (our) masculinity and the behaviours that go with it. In hindsight, I can claim that I was beginning to integrate some of my concerns about men and masculinity into my work as an educator and that this represents a turn towards the action dimension of action research.

The conference marked the end of the Men's Development in Organisations collaborative inquiry. Ian and I discussed the possibility of mounting an Open Space event on the same theme but we failed to persuade OPM to back it and our plans fizzled out. By December that year (1996) I had found another opportunity to put some energy into developing men at work. An acquaintance, James Traeger, had been commissioned by *The Springboard Consultancy*, a group specialising in women's development to write a men's development workbook as a companion volume to their very successful women's development workbook, *Springboard.*

It is ironic that an organisation founded and staffed exclusively by women should have sponsored this work – and fortunate that Jenny Daisley and Liz Willis, the owners of the company, were aware that James needed at least one male ally in this ground-

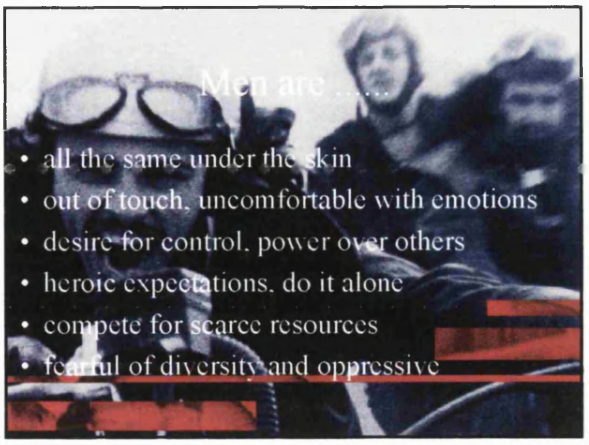
[6] I am referring to the Management Development Programme (MDP) that I introduced into the Hertfordshire Constabulary at about this time – see *Chapter Five: Reshaping my Professional Identity*

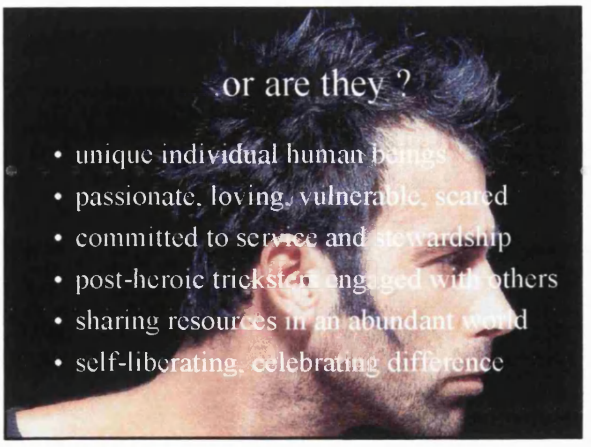
breaking project. My offer to mentor James professionally was accepted and we worked together throughout the next year (1997) as he began to formulate his ideas for the book and to develop and pilot an in-company training course to go with it.

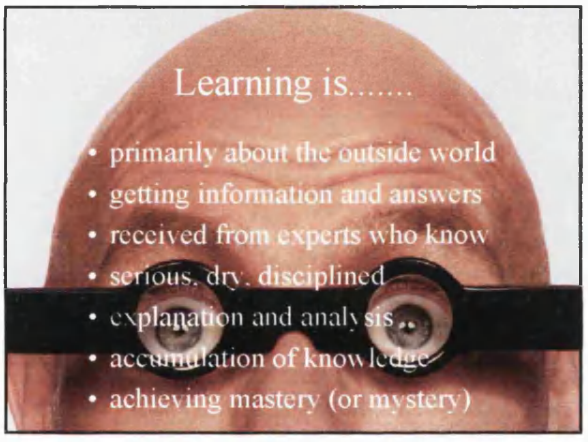
Navigator[7] (Traeger, Daisley et al. 1999) is very much James's book – though the central metaphor, for which it is named, came out of our discussions; as did some of the material in the early chapters on men, learning and organisations (which I originally developed for a seminar with the NHS Wales Equalities Unit in May 1997). Essentially, however, I saw my role as supporting James as a man in his relationships with his female co-authors. I was conscious that my reserves were low at that time; my marriage was ending, I had just begun the CARPP programme, moved house and changed jobs! But I wanted to contribute and I could summon my energy periodically to focus on James's needs. I think too that it was important that I was an older man able to "stand behind" the younger and more energetic James as he bore the brunt of the effort. The book *Navigator* is therefore, to some small degree at least, testimony to the quality of that mentoring relationship and I feel some vicarious pride in James's achievement.

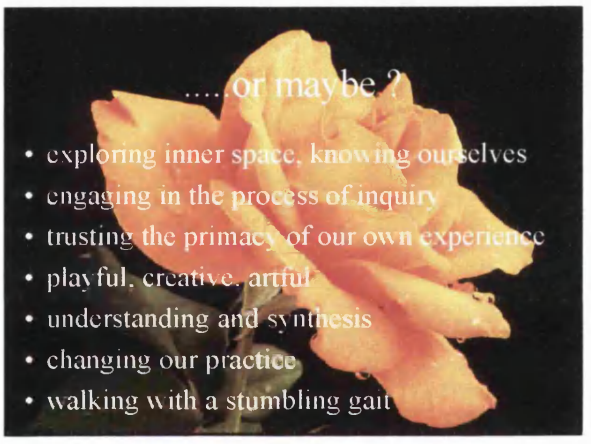
An invitation to speak at the NHS Men's Development Seminar in Wales came from someone who had heard me at the *Women and Men: Working Together for a Change* conference the previous summer. I was asked to treat my presentation as an awareness raising session to guide the audience... "gently towards identifying their development needs as men beyond the framework of traditional masculine roles and expectations[8]." With such an open brief, I decided to attempt to articulate my emerging understandings about men and masculinities, processes of learning, and the nature of organisations at the turn of the century. So, what were these "understandings" and how did I arrive at them? I can best demonstrate what they were by turning to the presentation itself. I will begin with three pairs of tables that I used to illustrate these themes. The images are an important part of what I am trying to convey.

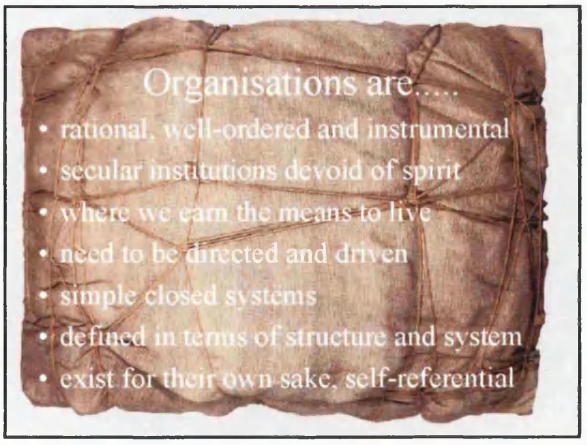
[7] The metaphor of men's lives as a journey is so common – whether the hero's journey of initiation or the wanderings of later life – that we thought the idea of learning to navigate life with more awareness of the territory and choice of direction would be attractive to many men.
[8] I am quoting here from the letter (dated 2nd April 1997) from Neil Rhys Wooding, Head of the NHS Wales Equalities Unit, inviting me to speak at the seminar

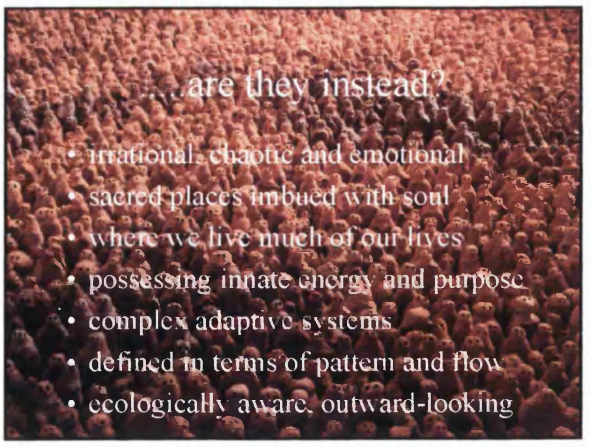












Men, Learning and Organisations

Of course, I elaborated somewhat on these bald statements in the course of the presentation. They have no pretensions to being academic or scholarly in a conventional sense; instead they represent some of the possibilities I glimpsed as I reflected (rather unsystematically) on my various long-term inquiries. As far as I am aware, they are an original formulation and I prize them as hard-won personal knowledge.

It would be dishonest to undergird them now with references that I was not aware of at the time. I dislike and distrust such "intellectual sandbagging." What I can do (and what feels more authentic) is to share some recent reflections[9] on the text of my presentation.

Men, Learning and Organisations: A Personal Perspective

The whole issue of gendered learning and development is highly emotive and I should make clear where I am coming from. As a man, speaking for myself with "universal intent" (Polanyi 1958), I am seeking to identify and articulate more positive and inclusive images of masculinity than those offered by patriarchal (or, indeed, feminist) stereotyping.

Organisational life is, I believe, particularly prone to glorify a narrow, oppressive and hegemonic view of masculinity. It is difficult for many men (typically white and professedly heterosexual) who wish to identify themselves as part of the "mainstream" to see beyond this point. What motivation do such men have to unearth and challenge the assumptions that underlie such a view? One could argue for equity and natural justice but I suspect that only enlightened self-interest is likely to bring about a sea change.

My own experience, and what I have learned from other men concerned with these issues, leads me to believe that it is possible to touch men's sensitivities about their masculinity without frightening them away. It requires the recognition and valuing of our uniqueness as persons as well as raising consciousness about the damaging effects of our gender conditioning and voicing some viable alternatives. The men in the group had no previous experience of men's development (and not much personal development of any kind) and, therefore, needed new language to conceptualise themselves differently.

[9] Taken from the introduction to *Men, Learning and Organisations: A Personal Perspective,* prepared for the *Gendering Management Learning Conference* (Mead 2000)

At the heart of my talk are the three sets of tables[10] offering some alternative perspectives on men, learning and organisations. In bringing them to this conference, I offer them not as definitive statements but as examples of the sort of discourse with which I believe men (and man-agers) need to engage. I guess that even suggesting this would not have been possible without the fruits of the feminist "project" and yet I do not think that men can simply pick up the baton of the women's movement. We have some basic epistemological groundwork to do for ourselves before we can claim to be on the move.

I am pleased to say that, with some amendments, the thoughts on men, learning and organisations expressed in this paper found their way into the Navigator Men's Development Workbook published by the Springboard Consultancy (which has done so much to promote and support women's development). I commend this programme (which I ruefully acknowledge to be sponsored by a women's organisation) as an excellent starting place for men embarking on their own development. Just as women have found a need to come together sometimes in single gender groups to explore issues and articulate a new position, so men, too, benefit from healthy contact and deep sharing in "men only" settings. Normalising this kind of process as part of organisational life will help to provide a proactive context for men's development. Men do not have to wait for mid-life crises in relationships, career or health to reassess the kind of masculinity they want to practise!

When I ask how I arrived at these views, the artificiality of compartmentalising my living inquiry becomes apparent – I simply don't know. I cannot trace them to immediate and particular sources. They have come out of the long, complex, multi-layered exploration of my practice and of the issues involved described above in *A Map of my Inquiry.*

Bramshill Fellowship

Excited and encouraged by these experiences of inquiry, in 1998 I decided it was time to step into the lion's den of masculinities in the police service. My occasional forays into the public domain, though worthwhile in their own right, had avoided the central issue – that of taking action where I might make a real difference (and where I had most to lose) in my own traditionally macho profession; the police.

[10] See inserted page

For years I had regarded myself as subversive of the narrow and oppressive organisational culture of the police service - yet I had also enjoyed the benefits of a successful career; promotion, status, salary. I had learned to play the game and choose my battles carefully – the very model of a "tempered radical" (Meyerson and Scully 1995). As I have already indicated, this was a time of great upheaval in my personal life. I had got used to taking risks and become impatient of "penny ante" change. I was determined to raise the stakes by challenging the unspoken taboos at the very heart of the police organisation. Later, Jack Whitehead showed me a quotation from Bakhtin (Morson and Emerson 1989) which reinforced my belief in the need for responsible action. Speaking of the fundamental error of rationalist philosophy, Bakhtin says:

> The fatal flaw is the denial of responsibility - which is to say, the crisis is at base an ethical one. It can be overcome only by an understanding of the act as a category into which cognition enters but which is radically singular and "responsible".

Intervention in my own organisation had certainly become an ethical issue for me. I could not sustain the gulf between the richer and more inclusive sense of masculinity that I embraced elsewhere and the narrow, oppressive masculinities that I witnessed (and sometimes enacted) in my professional life.

The route I chose was to frame my prospective PhD inquiry as action research into men and masculinities in the police service and to apply for a Bramshill Fellowship[11] to force organisational recognition of the issue. The application (which also featured in my portfolio for the CARPP Diploma/MPhil transfer process) was written towards the end of 1997 and submitted in January 1998. I prepared the ground by personal conversations with Peter Sharpe (then Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Constabulary, my home force), Richard Wells (then Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police – an unorthodox and influential figure who I had met whilst Director of the Accelerated Promotion Course 1988-92) and Neil Richards (senior academic at the Police Staff College and chairman of the Bramshill Fellowship examination board).

[11] Bramshill Fellowships are part of a national scheme to provide legitimacy and funding for independent research by UK police officers. Applicants must secure the sponsorship of their Chief Officers and persuade an examining board based at the Police Staff College, Bramshill of its academic merit.

I thought it was essential to build high level support for the project in light of some interesting and disturbing developments that threatened to scupper the ship at the dockside. My research journal for November 1997 illustrates the dangers of questioning such deeply held orthodoxies:

> Judi [Marshall] pointed out that the theme of my research - masculinities in the police service - is highly political (which I take to mean - operating in the mid-ground of real world activities). She referred me to work by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (Kanter 1977) on the way in which dominant groups alienate and exclude members of minorities (especially visible or identifiable ones - "The Story of O"). Despite my apparent success and high rank in the police service, I often feel quite marginal and am aware that, in my values and style, I can be quite threatening to my peers. How much more so if I direct attention to an issue that is at the root of their identity - for, almost without exception, my peers (and I) are white, middle-aged, middle-class, and male.

A week later a friend called me from Hertfordshire to tell me that rumours were rife within the Constabulary that I had "finally decided to come out of the closet as a homosexual" and I reflected in my journal:

> Apart from a gloriously ironic joke, what else is going on? It seems too much of a coincidence that it should happen exactly as I am formulating my research proposal. I have spoken of my interest in men and masculinity to several people in Hertfordshire in recent weeks and I certainly have a long-standing reputation for being a bit off-the-wall. Perhaps, at a systemic level, the dominant group is already seeking to marginalise and exclude me - for that would surely be the effect of being labelled gay.
>
> What an exquisite double bind! I cannot deny the allegation without compromising my values. I do not consider the accusation to be a slur. If I deny it, people could say: "You see. You are not really liberal and open-minded, as you claim. You are just like us." If I do not deny it, they could say: "You see. We told you so. This explains why he is so different." I shall let it ride. It seems that I will require all the political skills I can muster if I am to get my research taken seriously.

In the event, my application for a Bramshill Fellowship was accepted in July1998. Entitled *Policemen: Being and Becoming Men in the Police Service,* its stated objectives were:

> ... [to] open up and extend the debate [on equal opportunities issues in the police service] from an entirely new perspective - that of men and masculinity. Its intention is to develop and legitimise a richer and more inclusive notion of masculinity in the police service that is supportive of the cultural shift towards embracing diversity and nurturing people that the 1995 HMIC Equal Opportunities Thematic Report states is essential for improving performance.
>
> Identifying and encouraging the positive aspects of masculinity in the police service will help to match the well-intentioned rhetoric of equal opportunities with the reality of commensurate attitudes and behaviours - decency, fairness, openness, self-respect, co-operation, learning and a genuine commitment to quality of service.
>
> Men are in the majority (particularly in management) and men's attitudes and behaviour largely determine the prevailing culture. Creating the possibility of open debate about these issues is a pre-requisite to long term change and performance improvement.

I proposed an action research methodology with changes emerging from:

> ... rigorous cycles of action and reflection. Above all, it will be real people seeking to examine and improve their own practice - thus modelling the possibility of change as well as offering a deeper understanding of the issues involved.

And I envisaged a process:

> ... using biography and narrative techniques within a collaborative inquiry group to explore commonalities and differences in men's experience in the police service and to improve our practice.

Simple – all I had to do was implement the proposal... or so I thought. Actually, two things in particular caused me to change tack. The first of them was the reaction I experienced from several male colleagues whom I interviewed in June 1998 in a

series of "conversations with cops." I had chosen them as men who I saw to be outside the usual macho police mould and who I thought would be sympathetic to the aims of the project. Right on both counts – but the interviews left me feeling puzzled and dissatisfied. They had answered my questions; we had engaged in dialogue; we had spoken about being a man in the police service. They had interesting stories to tell and they wanted to help me with my research. And that, I realised, was the sticking point – it would always be my research. It was my inquiry, not theirs. I was asking them to meet me on my ground, not meeting them on the ground of their being. There was not going to be much life in this line of research – at least, not in the context I had framed of a group of policemen examining our collective masculine navel.

Second, in July, I met Amanda Sinclair, Professor of Management (Diversity and Change) at Melbourne Business School, at a CARPP seminar. She had just published *Doing Leadership Differently* (Sinclair 1998) an examination of gender, power and sexuality in a changing business culture. Her study of successful Australian executives highlighted the gendered conceptualisation and enactment of organisational leadership and identified a number of men and women who seemed to have transcended the dominant managerial masculinities[12] to "do leadership differently." I sent her a copy of *Police Stories* about which she said: (Sinclair 1998a)

> ... [It has] prompted me to reflect – spoke to me – about my choices, my defences, my pleasures and disappointments, what I have put in and leave out of the (self) authorised version of my own story. It helped me step back and see my career, "leadership" if you like, in better perspective... Reading it has given me courage to be more open about myself and to take some more risks in what I do.

In turn, she inspired me to realise that focusing on leadership in the police service rather than on masculinities would both provide scope for my inquiry and be much more inclusive of others' interests and concerns. A collaborative inquiry into developing ourselves (both men and women) as leaders would be far more congruent with the type of inclusive masculinity I espouse than a group of well-intentioned men

[12] Sinclair (p61) quotes Collinson and Hearn's (1994) categories of managerial masculinities: traditional authoritarianism, gentleman's club, entrepreneurialism, informalism and careerist.

helping me with my inquiry. I decided to convene an inquiry that would embody the values by which I seek to live as a man and not merely examine them.

The result was the Hertfordshire Action Inquiry Group (AIG): *Developing Ourselves as Leaders,* comprising men and women from many parts of the organisation committed to exploring and improving our own unique and individually situated practices as leaders. Issues of gender were rarely subject to more than tangential attention but, in the very way we conducted ourselves, the group cut across the hierarchical and patriarchal norms of the organisation. I learned that the process of such a collaborative inquiry itself, rather than the findings it may produce, can be a significant organisational intervention. Experiencing this first-hand has transformed my understanding of "research" and its potential for promoting cultural change. Although not framed as Participative Action Research, I believe our inquiry was indeed an act of liberation – at least for those involved in it.[13]

Literature and other influences

As well as the writers I have already mentioned, I would like to identify two particular sources that have influenced my thinking about men and the "problematising" of masculinity. The first is bell hooks. Her chapter *Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness* (hooks 1991) contains many insights that I find helpful. At the risk (as a white man) of "re-colonising" this territory, I claim that I and many men are, paradoxically, marginalised from our own lives by oppressive notions of masculinity - such as those I believe to prevail in the police service. She speaks of the need to "create spaces within that culture of domination if we are to survive intact" (p148) and she identifies ... "marginality as much more than a site of deprivation... it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (p149).

Collinson and Hearn, in two articles *Naming Men as Men* (Collinson and Hearn 1994) and *Breaking the Silence: On men, masculinities and managers* (Collinson and Hearn 1996) introduced me to the idea of multiple masculinities, of masculinity as something that we "do" and of.... "the strange silence .... [reflecting] ... an embedded and taken-

[13] I write extensively about the Action Inquiry Group in *ChapterFive: Reshaping my professional identity*

for-granted association, even conflation of men with organisational power, authority and prestige" (Ibid. p1). These ideas have contributed to my understanding of an oppressive, disembodied masculinity that, if we allow it, requires us to surrender our authentic selves and our integrity in order to "belong".

Important as these ideas have been, when I look round my bookshelves at the forty or fifty books and articles about men and masculinity, I notice that the vast majority (certainly of those I have actually read) come from very different genres. Mythopoetic works include *Iron John* (Bly 1990), *Men and the Water of Life* (Meade 1993), *The Hero's Journey* (Cousineau 1999) *Of Water and the Spirit* (Some 1994); books in the Jungian tradition such as *In Midlife* (Stein 1983), *Absent Fathers Lost Sons* (Corneau 1991), *The Soul's Code* (Hillman 1996), *Beyond the Hero* (Chinen 1993); literary classics like *The Odyssey* (Homer 1996), *The Iliad* (Homer 1990), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Joyce 1992), *Zorba the Greek* (Kazantakis 1961), *The Old Man and the Sea* (Hemingway 1993), and I see a few self-help books such as *Manhood* (Biddulph 1995) and *Navigator* (Traeger, Daisley et al. 1999).

It is to volumes such as these that I return time and again to bathe in their nourishing stories and draw strength from connection with archetypal energies. That is not to deny the importance of pro-feminist, socio-political, academic writings on masculinities, nor is it to be blind to the criticisms of mythopoetic writings, which range from "reactionary, conservative, backward-looking" (Tacey 1997) to the potential fascistic dangers of an uncritical application of mythic categories to contemporary political affairs (Ellwood 1999). Some rail against "essentialist" masculinism (Whitehead 2000) and claim that the mythopoetic men's movement represents a sexist, homophobic backlash against the advance of feminism.

I cannot deny that this may be the case in some instances but I have not once, in all the men's workshops and retreats I have attended, ever experienced any such sentiment or behaviour. Nor is that my reading of those texts. Again, I am with Tacey in valuing both the therapy culture (with its emphasis on healing men's pain) and the academic culture (with its emphasis on redefining men's power). He expounds this beautifully in the following quotation (Tacey 1997):

> Academic men's studies and the popular men's movement, however, do have more in common that either would perhaps care to realise. Both groups inhabit a post-patriarchal world, and while the therapy culture *feels* the legacy of an outworn patriarchy in the empty heart and suffering soul, academic culture *thinks* about how to overthrow the remaining structures of political patriarchy. Both cultures will have to come together in a future radicalising discourse. (p13)

I believe I have moved some way towards embracing both these cultures. But it is difficult and I have experienced the intolerance born of fear and disdain of one camp for the other and felt the tension of trying to bridge them. A cameo from a conference on Gendering Management Learning at Manchester University in March this year (2000) offers a "real life" illustration. The event was attended by about fifty participants - about twice as many women as men, virtually all academics. Despite attempts by some speakers to talk from their lived experience as gendered people, the predominant discourse was cerebral and abstract, with a strong leaning towards pro-feminist, socio-political orthodoxy. Here is an extract from the notes I wrote on the train returning from the conference, within two hours of the events they describe. My spoken words are shown in *italics*:

Gendering Management Learning

In the closing round of the day I begin to feel uncomfortable. The day's discussions have somehow missed the point. We have spoken about dichotomies and false dichotomies between masculinity and femininity, male and female, gendered subjects etc. but rarely if at all have we spoken of men and women. I do not think it is possible to separate gender entirely from biological sex, though it seems fashionable to do so. Qi Xu [one of the participants] has just given a short input on Yin and Yang and I want to respond to this.

There is something about allowing oneself to move fully into one of the dualities that can, under the right conditions, provide a portal through into the other. I am thinking of experience in men's groups such as Gaunt's House[14] where expressing our aggressive energy through drumming and the fire dance lead to the place of compassion and love at the water and earth shrines.

[14] See *In Search of Spirit* earlier in this chapter

I relate this to the group, describing it as an aspect of my experience and practice. There is an immediate frisson in the room. Several women respond (angrily?), questioning me. "Is this just a single event enabling men to access this different energy, or has it made any real difference when you get back into the "real" world?" *Yes. I believe so. I cannot help but take that deeply embodied knowing with me.* "It sounds like Iron John, tree-hugging stuff" *Well, I think the stereotype is quite close to the reality.* "Is this for men only?" *Yes* "Could I come on one of these events" *No.* "I'm sorry, I can only hear the men's room here. Men have always had privileged access to this sort of space"" *No reply* "Are you aware of the political dimension?" *Of course, I understand that it has political implications.*

I am feeling a bit under siege. *I will stop talking soon. I wanted to raise a possibility, not defend a position. This is simply my experience – that, sometimes, by moving fully into one energy, it becomes possible to connect with its polarity. The Yin Yang model shows that energetic movement. So, too, does Gestalt – which enables some sort of dialectic between polarities, making it possible to transcend them... to move to a different position. I just want to suggest that there are other ways of trying to connect these two positions [masculine and feminine] without trying to occupy the space between them or to get stuck by trying to avoid either place. I think, maybe, that is why these energies leak out destructively in the workplace, because we don't have the means to give them healthy expression. I am struggling to find the words here; I don't have the vocabulary to explain what I mean more clearly.*

This is an incomplete and pretty inaccurate record of the exchanges. Interesting, in hindsight, that no other man spoke... fear, perhaps, not wishing to be identified with what I was saying. There were many nods around the room Judi Marshall, Elena Antonacopoulou and others I cannot name. Elena supported my "speaking from the heart" and afterwards, Judi came over and said she liked the way I held my ground and dealt with the "potentially explosive" situation. "We have come a long way that we could handle that today".

I am still too close to the events to judge their significance and I think Judi is seeing more deeply and more perceptively than I am. It would be very useful to hear her considered comments about what was going on in the room. I was surprised by the vehemence of some of the questions (naïve of me). I am glad I spoke in the big group. I wanted to claim legitimacy for my kind of inquiry and for embodied knowledge (I want to say the primacy of embodied knowledge but this would be to fall back into a hierarchical mode).

Judi Marshall who was also there (indeed she intervened at one point to calm the exchanges) later wrote to me:

> So I think "the personal", embodied, "how we live" had skated past us a bit... and into this, you spoke – clearly from your own experience about living, engendered. You did not stereotype yourself and I was shocked that people who spoke seemed to. You were, in my view, conceptual and experiential. But people did not respond to both and therefore "hear" more fully.

We have a long way to go to integrate the experiential and conceptual traditions. Indeed, as Judi also said: "Perhaps we are more unusual at Bath than I usually bother to think."

Driftwood and Dogmeat

There is one more "tale from the men's room" that demands to be heard; the story of *Driftwood and Dogmeat* - about my close and loving friendship with Chris Cole[15] - which lies close to the heart of this long running inquiry into men and masculinity. Like Stuart Miller (Miller 1986) whose book *Men and Friendship* I read in the early 1990s, until meeting Chris I had a strong sense of a void in my life where male friendship should have been. I intend to close this chapter with an open letter to Chris, which will I think, speak for itself:

Dear Chris,

The recipe for *Pork Chops Abileke* hangs on the wall in my flat with its picture of you, beside the fire, looking short of sleep and several gin and tonics to the good. That was the penultimate evening of our sailing trip to Ithaca in 1996, and the last time we went on holiday together. God, how we laughed!

There are also two collages of photographs, one of our first sailing trip and the other of our walking holiday in Morocco. They are also on the walls but temporarily covered up with things Alison and I have made. As I write those words, their symbolism is apparent. I fear

[15] A fellow police officer I met at Bramshill in 1990 – see *Police Stories*

that meeting Alison and leaving Sara has preoccupied me so much recently that there has not been enough room for us?

Anyway, *Pork Chops Abileke* always make me smile with pleasure and it seems to catch the imagination of everyone who sees it. Richard (Olivier) who has done so much menswork, even written a book about it, saw it a few weeks ago and said: "That is fabulous. You know I've never done that. Never really spent that sort of time alone with another man." Looking at it now, I particularly like the fact that it acknowledges all the years of friendship that preceded that night and made it possible.

Do you remember when we first met? You came to work with me at Bramshill in 1990-91 to help develop the new-style Accelerated Promotion Course. We spent months working through the details. I could never remember the sequence and timing of the modules and would call plaintively to you every other day to come and explain them to me one more time. It took me a while to realise that I liked you as well as respecting your mind and quickness of wit. You were a great support and a valued colleague but it wasn't until later when I was preparing to leave Bramshill that it began to dawn on me how much I would miss you.

I didn't say much about it until the farewell dinner. You came over to the flat I had borrowed to help prepare the food for the meal and afterwards I gave each of you a small present (what was it? – a book I bet). I remember saying that I felt as though our relationship had been like father and son and then correcting myself and saying that, actually, you were the younger brother I never had. It felt like a risky thing to say because, despite my outward confidence, I knew that I was letting my guard down, opening my heart to you. I was not used to allowing such vulnerability (I am still not, whatever fine words to the contrary you might hear me speak).

I need not have feared. A week or so later you wrote a letter telling me what our time together had meant to you closing with an invitation I was slow to recognise "If you ever want a travelling companion to Skiathos..." and signed "From your brother-in-arms." I've probably never told you that I still have the letter, pasted in a scrapbook.

Two and a half years later, in May 1994, we flew to Preveza for the first time to pick up our yacht – the good ship *Helios* – from Lakka. I guess we met up half a dozen times or so in the interim – at Bramshill, in Hertfordshire and Devon. You came to see me a few months after leaving Bramshill. I was on my own, house-sitting in Aston near Stevenage. You walked into the kitchen, sat down and said; "Trish has left me." I remember, now, your shock and distress

and how I just sat and listened across the table when what I wanted to do was hug you. I'm sorry that I suppressed that desire. I have since learned to trust my intuition. I have also learned that men can touch men – straight or gay – without the world falling apart. You probably knew that already – but I didn't.

I felt very privileged and touched that you shared so much with me. How open was I with you at the time? Had I told you about Margaret, for example, or was I still maintaining the fiction of a happy marriage? I can't remember – but I do know that our friendship moved to a deeper level that day. I appreciated your honesty and, as the months passed and we spent more time together, came to admire your determination to create the life you wanted for yourself, resisting the temptation to fall into another full-time relationship with Leslie. Later, when Sara and I parted, I often drew inspiration from the way you handled the split with Trish.

A year or so passed and in May 1993 we arranged to meet in Guildford for supper. The day before, I wrote in my journal; "I am excited about seeing Chris tomorrow... could we do something together next year? Sailing? I am afraid that I would bore him or not be adventurous enough." In the event, I said nothing about my fears and we agreed to go sailing twelve months' later. It amuses me now to see how cautiously we manoeuvred ourselves towards that holiday. Perhaps we both sensed how important it would be – the single best week of my life!

Despite my qualms, which almost led to us going to Cortijo Romero instead (so there would be other people around), we did charter a boat to sail the Ionian Sea together, in May 1994. In front of me now, as I write, are the collage of photographs from my bedroom wall (stripped of its temporary covering) and the half shell I kept for myself when I gave you the other half at Parga on our journey back.

The memories come flooding back: the bright yellow butterflies dancing across the wave tops to flap lazily around the deck as we hove to and sunbathed ; dancing with the old Greek men in out of the way tavernas; our personal beach barbecue in Emerald Bay; swimming naked by the light of the full moon; talking late into the night; leaping fully-clothed into the water to chase fish; capsizing the windsurfer as we tried to sail tandem; the birth of "Driftwood and Dogmeat" as we (wisely I think) opted to go behind the oil tanker; running aground and winching ourselves off; the pervasive smell of diesel below decks (urghh); the fireflies we drunkenly peed on; me asking if snorkelling was supposed to be difficult (and you removing the excess plastic moulding to create an airway and patiently explaining that it was a lot easier when breathing through something larger than a drinking straw); running before the wind and sailing

at top speed into Lakka on the final day, revelling in conditions that had driven others into harbour hours before; you singing Bungalow Bill (enthusiastically if not tunefully) and me heaving on the tiller like an Olympic oarsman to keep on course.

That week, you taught me to say "Yes" to life. I discovered that the moon needs the sun, that my slower, deeper rhythms are enlivened by your brightness and warmth. You helped me find some of that solar energy inside myself, helped me become more connected to the world about us and more willing to take some of the risks demanded by life's adventure. Do you remember looking back at Lakka from the ferry as we began the journey home and seeing the sun and the full moon both high in the sky above the island? I believe that we were blessed by archetypal powers – Helios and Selene – who enabled us to transcend the bounds of friendship to find a love that is rarely enacted between men but lies dormant in all of us only wanting the courage and opportunity to emerge.

What could possibly follow that? We were probably wise to do something different the next year even though the Hotel from Hell in Marrakesh was a bit of a let down. We both had twenty-four hour stomach bugs from dodgy food and the rooms were so awful that we moved four times in a week. I still feel apologetic for having suggested it in the first place. But it was not all bad - we had some good days walking in the mountains, you taught me to haggle, and we brushed our teeth in gin and tonic for want of drinkable water. I missed the close companionship of sharing a boat – having you all to myself for a few hours each day. Time together is precious and I resented having to share you with other people.

Unlike the sailing holiday, which nourished us, I think the trip to Morocco drew on those resources to get us through with sense of humour intact. The adversity (minor I admit, in comparison with the hardships suffered by the great Victorian explorers) seemed to temper our relationship, testing and confirming its endurance under pressure.

After that we were ready to go sailing again, this time (1996) to Ithaca. Homer's majestic tale of the wanderings of Odysseus and of his eventual return has long fascinated me as a metaphor for the journey of men in mid-life and as a parallel to my own story. You and I have both succumbed to the charms of Circe and Calypso. On the second or third day we sailed close-hauled for eight hours to Vassiliki, heeling over until the gunwales streamed with water, touching 10.5 knots as we pushed the boat to its limits. But I got dehydrated and next day the sea got up – a tricky swell – and by the time we landed at Frikes I had lost my sea legs and my nerve. We spent the next day ashore exploring the island, climbing Pilicata (Hill of Hermes) to the spot from which you can see three seas, where Odysseus' palace is reputed to have

been. Ever since then, Cavafy's poem has reminded me that it is the journey to Ithaca that really matters, not the destination itself. Nevertheless, for me, making the passage to Ithaca together sealed the covenant of our friendship – not mere travellers but fellow-pilgrims.

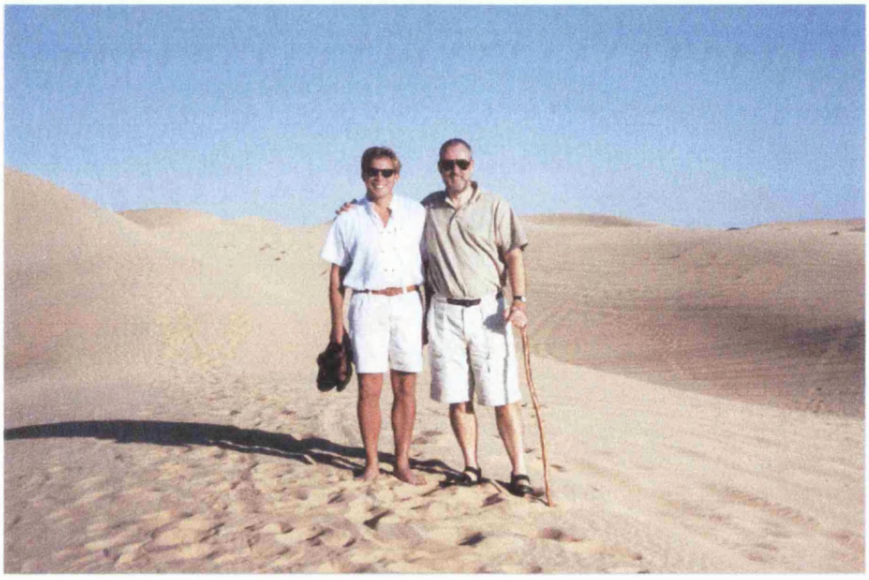
The next morning we woke early, looked out to sea, and you declared it calm and safe to go. Hesitant, I begged another hour's sleep and returned to my cabin still nervous of the open water. I knew we could not stay in port forever and made up my mind to trust your judgement. At the appointed time, I came back on deck; we slipped our moorings and motored out of Frikes onto a virtual millpond. True friend, you did not once rebuke me or laugh at my ridiculous fears as we made our way to Abileke Bay to cook the best pork chops in the world – ever!

Then, somehow, over the next couple of years we drifted apart. I have often wondered why. Perhaps we mortals are simply not destined to do more than touch the mountain tops, living our everyday lives in the foothills and lowlands. I did not see it coming and, by the time I realised it had happened, felt powerless to do anything about it. I wrote you a couple of letters (unsent) and spoke to you once or twice, asking if everything was all right. Why couldn't I just tell you how heartsick I felt and how much I missed you?

You had your own troubles and I was pretty wrapped up in Alison and consumed by the misery of divorce and separation from the kids. I guess I was not really there for you and I should have been. So, for a time we became more distant and our friendship cooled. You refocused your life and spent increasing periods working abroad. I stayed at Bramshill getting on with my job and putting more and more energy into my PhD. And that could well have been that, except that the flame was never entirely extinguished and we both slowly healed in our respective lairs. Is it an inevitable male characteristic, do you suppose, to lick our wounds in private?

I was a bit nervous when I first came out to Abu Dhabi in May last year to work with you on the Police Commanders Programme. I did not want to build up my hopes too high and I think we were both wary about spending too much time together. Nevertheless, it was good to see you and by the end of the week I felt much easier in your company. I flew back to England optimistic, feeling that we had turned the corner and I was delighted when, later you invited me to come back out in December to repeat my "slot" on the course.

My fiftieth birthday fell on 12th December, a couple of days after my session ended and, thinking about it over the summer, knew that I wanted to celebrate it with you. Cue for camels, Bedouin tents, the old soukh in Dubai, champagne and dinner cruise along the



Corniche at night. It was a magical time (despite the back pain and the walking stick). The years seemed to fall away as we worked and played, laughed and shared confidences once more. Changing flights so that we could fly back together not only enabled me to give you a rare drubbing at backgammon, it also seems to me symbolic of the renewal of our close and loving friendship. Driftwood and Dogmeat are back in business!

Yours ever, Geoff
2nd July 2000

I gave the letter to Chris soon after writing it. He had come round to my flat for a drink. I sat nervously while he read it. Then he stood up, stretched out his arms towards me and, as I stood in turn, embraced me. His gesture said all I needed to know.

Commentary

In this commentary on *The Men's Room*, I focus on three of the twelve distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity described in *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*, exemplifying their embodiment in, and emergence from, my practice of *living inquiry*. I have chosen Experiential Grounding, Self-generated Creativity and Textual Quality as particularly, though not exclusively, relevant to this chapter and I invite you to bear them in mind throughout your reading of the thesis.

Experiential Grounding: I am starting here because my commitment to anchor my *living inquiry* in the bedrock of my experience is the foundation of all that follows. In the early sections of *The Men's Room*, I describe my participation in several men's workshops and ritual retreats. In *Childhood's End* and *In Search of Spirit*, for example, I think you will recognise how I consciously chose to step into new experiences: engaging with other men at a deeper level of intimacy and, through ritual, opening myself to encounters with the spirit world. Less dramatically, but equally importantly, in later sections I describe my first involvement with collaborative inquiry in the *Men's Development in Organisations* group and the ongoing support I received during my separation and divorce as a member of Peter Neall's men's group.

I think you will also see how these experiences have influenced my growing understanding of men's development and of my own identity as a man, enabling me to speak and write authentically and authoritatively about these issues. I believe that the recording of my presentation on *The Future of Men at Work* demonstrates these embodied qualities. It was made within three weeks of meeting the "three strange angels" at Gaunt's House and I was, quite literally, inspired by that experience. The chapter closes with *Driftwood and Dogmeat*, an open letter to my best friend Chris. Here I am touching several levels of experience: the experience of our close and loving friendship and of our adventures together, that of writing and giving the letter to Chris, and that of sharing it with a wider audience. How else could I know about these things, except by doing them? As the poet Kabir says[16]: "If you have not lived through something it is not true".

[16] The last line of *How much is not true*, translated by Robert Bly in Bly, R., J. Hillman, et al., Eds. (1992). The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart. New York, Harper Collins. p282

Self-generated Creativity: In my view, this attribute permeates the entire text and is apparent in many different forms. I have located this commentary here because the release of this energy seems to have been triggered by my involvement in men's work. Perhaps the most obvious forms are the stories, poems, drawings and paintings that feature in all six chapters of the thesis. I have included them where they seem to me to be integral to the inquiry process rather than to illustrate or enliven more conventional academic writing (though I think they do incidentally have that effect). For example, early in this chapter, in *Childhood's End,* I turn to poetry and painting to convey the impact of "meeting" my long-dead father during a ritual at a men's workshop. Not a natural poet or painter, I sometimes have a powerful and spontaneous urge to create "artistically rendered forms". At such times I often experience heightened emotional sensitivity, writing or painting through my tears – whether of pain or joy.

At the highest level, my self-generated creativity is expressed in the evolving form of my life as I claim the right (within bounds) to live the life I choose. Thus, in *The Men's Room,* my deepening understanding of the possibilities for male friendship is enacted in my relationship with Chris, described in *Driftwood and Dogmeat.* In such ways, through self-generated creativity, my originality of mind is demonstrated both in the text and beyond the text, in living my life of inquiry.

Textual Quality: I am particularly conscious, as I prepare this thesis for examination, of an imperative to communicate my learning effectively. From the very beginning however, writerly conceit has demanded a well-written text. In *Chapter Four: Healing Journeys* I describe how, just as the world is going digital and multi-media, I have fallen in love with writing. I am a writer (as well as an educator) and I am proud of the text I have written but you, the reader, must be the final arbiter. I can assert, for example, that *In Search of Spirit* meets my criteria of an open and accessible text in which my meanings are clear and the images rich and evocative but I cannot know – unless you tell me – whether you agree with my judgement or whether I succeed in holding your interest and attention.

I think *The Men's Room* contains a variety of excellent passages and striking images but the interplay between *mythos* and *logos* is minimal. This improves in subsequent chapters as I develop the capacity to integrate experiential narratives, reflective and analytical writing, stories and imagery with the ideas of others to theorise about the nature of *living inquiry.* The section *Once upon a time* in *Chapter Four: Healing Journeys*, in which I develop ideas of narrative identity and mythic resonance, is a good example of such integration.

Interlude II

Sunday 8th October 2000

The space between

Today I am very conscious of writing as a physical activity stretching out over time. One of the poems in *The Men's Room* was written as long ago as 1993. Other portions of the text were written at various times since joining the CARPP programme in 1997. I began putting this thesis together in May 2000 and I anticipate that it will take another year or so to complete. The process is developing its own rhythm and flow. Sometimes I am so energised and excited by the act of writing that I can hardly sleep. All I want to do is bring the pen into contact with the page and let the words tumble out. At other times, I know that writing would be futile. I need to be doing other things; to be inquiring in other ways, earning a living, engaging with others, resting.

I have been in just such a space since finishing *The Men's Room* about six weeks ago. It has been a hard and painful space as Sara (my ex-wife) and I learned that our sixteen-year old son Tom had been diagnosed with Freidreich's Ataxia, a genetic condition leading to progressive degeneration of the nervous system. Hard and painful but not bleak and barren because there has been great richness and joy among the tears. Tom's maturity and courage in the face of this life-threatening and debilitating illness are quite inspiring. Whatever rancour Sara and I still felt towards each other following our separation and divorce has melted away as we come together to support Tom and I am rejoicing in a renewed sense of family. It seems all the more appropriate, therefore, to write next about the struggle to live with greater authenticity and integrity, and to find joy, in loving relationships. There is, perhaps, no more important and challenging arena for "living inquiry".

The space has also been one of reflection upon what I have already written and of preparation for the next phase. Despite what I said in the first paragraph about the kairatic ebb and flow of the writing process, I had rather naively expected to complete one chapter and move straight on to the next. In fact, as soon as *The Men's Room* was finished, four questions came to mind and I have been mulling on them ever since in dialogue with Jack Whitehead and on my own:

- What question(s) is the text seeking to answer?
- What claims to knowledge am I making?
- By what standards should the text be judged?
- How is this inquiry Action Research?

The questions bring the nature of the text and of living inquiry sharply into focus and I need to bear them in mind as I go on so that the writing itself continues the process of inquiry. I would also like to share Jack's responses with you and use them as a springboard from which to articulate my own understanding of these issues – particularly in relation to *The Men's Room.*

What question(s) is the text seeking to answer?

> *Jack writes*: As the text is being submitted for a doctoral degree it must contribute to an answer to a question of the kind, 'How am I expressing, defining and communicating my originality of mind and critical judgement in living my life of inquiry?"
>
> For me your text answers many other kinds of question, such as: What forms of representation can communicate my spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values? How can I communicate my life of inquiry in a way which makes sense to my reader and makes an original contribution to knowledge?

I decide to pursue this further by reading Collingwood (Collingwood 1939) on the logic of question and answer. Writing with admirable clarity, this distinguished philosopher identifies the inability of a propositional logic to distinguish between "true" and "false" answers without knowing the question(s) which the propositions address.

> Meaning, agreement and contradiction, truth and falsehood, none of these belonged to propositions in their own right, propositions by themselves; they belonged only to propositions as the answers to questions: each proposition answering a question strictly correlative to itself (p33)

What, then, are the correlative questions that *The Men's Room* seeks to answer? In the physical sciences we might expect to deduce the answers from pre-existing questions but in the more approximate, non-linear world of human inquiry, where motives and causality are always unclear and disputable, we must also allow a more intuitive, inductive process to lead back to questions which help to make sense of our lives (and of our texts).

Jack identifies questions of representation and communication; questions that are essentially located in the text. I find this very helpful and acknowledge my desire to find appropriate forms of representation and to communicate effectively. Yet, behind them lies a deeper, more existential question, which is prefigured in my prayer to Hermes in the *Prelude*: "How can I live well as a man?" Of course, *The Men's Room* only offers tentative and partial answers. My emphasis there is on being a man amongst men - and living well as a man involves much more than that.

What claims to knowledge am I making?

> *Jack writes*: I need to see the whole thesis to give an answer to this question. In the text you make very few claims to knowledge. You do make the following claims, which could helpfully be explicated:
>
> "I learned that the process of such a collaborative inquiry itself, rather than the findings it may produce, can be a significant organisational intervention. Experiencing this first-hand had transformed my understanding of 'research' and its potential for promoting cultural change"
>
> "I claim that I and many men are, paradoxically, marginalised from our own lives by oppressive notions of masculinity – such as those I believe to prevail in the police service"

I agree with Jack, to the extent that I have made few explicit claims to *propositional* knowledge, though I have made substantial claims to living knowledge embodied in my practice as a man. Some of these are included in the extract from Navigator (Traeger, Daisley et al. 1999) in *The Men's Room.* For ease of reference, I shall paraphrase and number them here.

1. To find a solid sense of my masculinity that is grounded in my own life and values

2. To gain a new outlook on work and life based on what I truly want for myself

3. I now relate differently to other men; more open, loving and accepting of who they are, less competitive and fearful.

4. I am less confused in my dealings with women – and less reliant on women for emotional and physical support.

5. I now recognise and honour my own creativity in painting, poetry, prose and dance

6. I am living a life with more integrity and authenticity. I am developing a sense of who I am in the world, and accepting my unconditional right to be.

7. I am opening myself more to the universe, and I am beginning to make contact with my own spiritual nature.

I believe that there is evidence in *The Mens Room* to support some of these claims – specifically 1,3,5 and 7. *Police Stories* speaks to 2, and I anticipate that the next chapter on *Postcards from the Edge* will address both 4 and 6.

I also realised in conversation with Jack that, in expecting my letter to Chris "speak for itself", I had omitted an important claim to knowledge: that experiencing a mutually loving and accepting relationship with another man has opened me to "other" more generally. I believe that much of the hostility that finds expression in sexism, racism, homophobia and other forms of intolerance and oppression has its roots in men's fear of other men.

Learning – through healthy male contact – that such fears are mostly groundless is possible and may be an essential precursor to genuinely embracing difference and diversity in our society.

By what standards should the text be judged?

> *Jack writes:* By standards which both show an appreciative and engaged response to your own standards and meet standards of scholarship of inquiry appropriate for the award of a PhD degree. For me, these standards include spiritual responses to the life-affirming energy embodied in your text. They include aesthetic responses to your expressive arts in communicating some of the most profoundly important emotional responses in living a life of inquiry. They include standards of practice and judgement in relation to ethical values of being a professional police officer.
>
> I'm judging your text in relation to Boyer's ideas on scholarship where he argued for an extension of the idea of scholarships of teaching, application and integration. I think you fulfil each of these kinds of scholarship with the important addition that you are contributing to a scholarship of inquiry.

I particularly value Jack's recognition of the spiritual, aesthetic and ethical dimensions of my living inquiries. I am also clear that I wish to make a contribution to the scholarship of inquiry. Reflecting on *The Men's Room,* I would add two additional standards by which I invite you to judge the text.

The first of these is the extent to which you are able to engage with my stories of living inquiry and, in so doing, the extent to which they resonate with and support your own "will to meaning". In using this phrase I am drawing on Viktor Frankl's classic work *Man's Search for Meaning* (Frankl 1984) in which he adds to Freudian notions of "the will to pleasure" and Adlerian notions of "the will to power" with his own formulation of the "will to meaning" (defined as the striving to find concrete meaning in personal experience - p106) as a primary existential drive. I do not seek, in any way, to constrain your own search for meaning – least of all to define your inquiries in my terms. But I do write in the belief that sharing my stories (sometimes very personal stories) can help others – both men and women - towards a deeper understanding of their own.

The second additional standard recognises Patti Lather's (Lather 1994) strategy of ironic validity in which: The text is resituated as a representation of its "failure to represent what it points toward but cannot reach" (p41). To what extent do I succeed

in creating evocative and engaging forms of representation whilst simultaneously acknowledging that they neither are, nor do they describe, an objective reality. Put another way: as a storyteller, can I put my heart and soul into telling a story and be clear that it is "only" a story? I have to be able to do both of these together if I am to avoid either colluding with a modernist objectification of the world or becoming paralysed by postmodern relativism.

I am conscious of feeling that I do not want to pre-determine all the standards by which the text should be judged. It seems to me that such standards must emerge in the course of the creative process and I agree with Lyotard (Lyotard 1984) that they are inextricably bound up with each other:

> A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he [sic] writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done.* (p81 – original emphasis)

Issues of validity and appropriate standards of judgement will therefore continue to arise throughout the thesis and I expect to give them particular attention in the chapter I intend to write on *Living Inquiry.*

How is this inquiry Action Research?

> *Jack writes*: There are many definitions of Action Research. I take action research to be an inquiry which expresses originality of mind and critical judgement in the creation and testing of one's own living theories of one's own learning through practice and reflection. One of the early definitions from Carr and Kemmis was that action research involved an attempt to improve one's own practice, the development of understanding and attempts to improve the social context in which practice was located.
>
> I think your text clearly meets these criteria in a number of ways. Your inquiries are grounded in your living practices and reflections in an intimate relationship between

> your personal and professional relations and activities. You have engaged in action research which meets criteria of both collaborative inquiry and participatory inquiry without being constrained by their "methodologies". One of the reasons I like the ideas of living contradictions, living inquiries and living theories is that they focus attention on the originality of mind and critical judgement of each individual in creating their own contributions to "educational" knowledge.

I notice that early in *The Men's Room* I claim, in hindsight, to have undertaken a "significant personal inquiry into men and masculinity". Over a period of nine years (1992 – 2000) I chart various activities traversing Heron's (Heron 1992) four epistemological domains – experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. The fact that it required hindsight to identify the form of the inquiry might be taken to preclude it from "mainstream" Action Research methodologies most of which seem to require a systematic contribution to practical knowledge through some variant of the original Lewinian research cycle: acting, observing, reflecting and planning.

However, Jack's response helps me to realise that whilst I identify with the broad aims of an action research approach, I do not adhere to any particular methodological formulation. Indeed, what fascinates me is to trace the parameters (if there be any) of my own more holistic processes of inquiry. Thus, I think I can justifiably claim that my inquiries into men and masculinity accord with the principles outlined by Reason and Bradbury (Reason and Bradbury 2000):

> [Action Research] seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities

whilst trusting the emergent, developmental form of my own methods – intense involvement, slow mulling on experience, creative representation, occasional articulation of my understandings and personal action in the world – to take me where I need to go. Because I am strongly kinaesthetic, I feel my way forward, probing and testing, to find the grain of the inquiry, to follow the unfolding path of my life in the belief that living and inquiring are one and the same.

Once again, there is much more to say – though the wording of the original question now seems unduly restrictive. Perhaps a better question would be; "What is the nature of my inquiry?" In any event, I will hold the issue in mind as the thesis develops. I sense that I need to explore other aspects of my living inquiry before attempting a fuller answer to the question.

My next chapter will focus on inquiry in the context of loving relationships; not from some detached perspective but through narratives of the self from early childhood to the present day and I am conscious that doing so will take the thesis into some highly contentious areas. Writing about living her life as inquiry, Judi Marshall (Marshall 1999) speaks about the "edge" she encounters around personal stories:

> There are therefore boundary issues about how personal to be as I articulate my perspective and paths of sense-making... These boundaries are not clear-cut; finding and articulating them is itself an aspect of inquiry... I do not want to tell "confessional tales" to no purpose (but they sometimes may be to valuable purposes) or to make myself or others vulnerable.

On first reading this passage I could not imagine placing such limits on my stories. "No taboos," I cried in a fit of bravado. Now, with Tom's illness, I begin to see the point. I need to work this "edge" with awareness and sensitivity. Some stories are simply not mine to tell and some that are have no place in this thesis. I need to balance their relevance and contribution to this discourse against their potential to cause harm to those I love (and their right to a degree of privacy).

Another recent article also challenges my intention to move more deeply into such personal territory. Writing from a social constructivist position, Alan Bleakley (Bleakley 2000) is dismissive of the "personal-confessional" genre and of the humanistic values underpinning teleological notions such as "growth" or "development".

> This high-humanist-existentialist version of autobiography as confession offers a pretence of "wholesome sincerity" and constructs identity as unique, where life's programme is to strive for authenticity. (p22)

My response is ambivalent. On the one hand, I am sympathetic to his aesthetic and ethical criticism of the superficial and naïve storytelling of the confessional television chat show and the glib, unreflexive assumptions of selfhood embodied in so many new age "self-improvement" books and workshops. On the other hand, I do not go so far as to say that the self is merely a product of the "deep structure of language" and social practice.

To present the issue as a straightforward dichotomy between a self that is either determinedly unitary (modernist) or irredeemably fragmented (post-modernist) seems to me too simplistic. My sense of self is multi-faceted. Through living inquiries I seek to reveal some of these facets and find connections between them. I strive to embrace the apparent paradox of the one and the many and to live as if "I" matter. I think of my inquiries less in terms of "growth" or "development" and more in terms of "healing" – making whole. My understanding is always shifting and the more I discover, the less I know.

In any event, I'm not sure that the stories of living inquiry presented here do fall within Bleakley's "personal-confessional" genre. I see them rather as *postcards from the edge* [1] - messy texts emerging from my creative self through which I inquire and through which I hope to help you engage with your own inquiries. I am prepared to take the risk that these personal experiences are worth sharing and also to subject them to Bleakley's test... "that [such] stories need to be interesting, they need to have aesthetic depth as well as ethical focus" (ibid. p23). We shall see.

[1] A phrase borrowed from the title of actress Carrie Fisher's autobiography

Chapter Three

Postcards from the Edge

> Karen, I'm with you because I choose to be with you. I don't want to live someone else's idea of how to live. Don't ask me to do that. I don't want to find out one day that I'm at the end of someone else's life. I'm willing to pay for mine... to be lonely sometimes... to die alone if I have to... I think that's fair[1]

I'm debating where to begin this chapter since, in a sense, the whole of my life has been a struggle to find happiness in loving relationships. I had not thought of this struggle as inquiry until I joined the CARPP programme at Bath in February 1997. Alison and I had been having an illicit affair for six months and my twenty-four year marriage to Sara was in tatters. At the first supervision meeting with Jack Whitehead, we spoke about our intended inquiries and I said that I wanted to explore the possibility of relating with integrity and authenticity in the workplace. This seemed to be a worthy endeavour and, at the next meeting in March, I duly replayed a tape recording I had made of a conversation on this subject with Roger, a work colleague. Interesting and worthwhile, but somehow missing the point entirely.

On the way back I realised, "How on earth can you go on talking about integrity and authenticity at work when your whole life is founded on a lie?" I felt extreme discomfort at the dissonance between these two positions. My powers of concentration were very low at that time and I could scarcely read or write, so at the next supervision session, which happened to be with Judi Marshall, I declared "I'm afraid I have not really done any research. All my energy is taken up trying to get through this situation." To which Judi responded "I think you are right in the middle of your inquiry. Perhaps this is your work now". With that encouragement I relinquished my fantasy that inquiry has to be "out there" (a formal, rational process disconnected from lived experience) and realised that it can also be "in here" (a holistic and subjective process giving direction and meaning to life).

[1] Denys Finch-Hatton to his lover Karen Blixen, from the film *Out of Africa.*

By July, we formed our semi-permanent supervision groups and I felt safe enough to begin writing about myself. Over the next six months *Out of the Frying Pan* emerged, partly out of my need to make sense out of what was happening, and partly out of the desire to tell my story. To find a voice, through which I could re-establish my identity as a separated, then divorced, single man.

I wrote mostly for myself but increasingly with a sense of audience too. As I got to know Jack Whitehead and the other members of the supervision group, I wanted that voice to be heard, to share what was going on in my life – just as I became interested in hearing about their lives. When *Out of the Frying Pan* was finished (it became the focus of my Diploma/MPhil transfer paper) I continued to write occasionally about these aspects of my life. Sometimes I found it helpful to reflect on a particular issue or process. At other times, the act of writing was a search for meaning, a form of inquiry in itself.

As a writer, I am fascinated by the intimate connection (and tension) between living and telling. Referring to Sartre's injunction in *Nausea* (Sartre 1964) "But you have to choose: live or tell", Erving Polster, a canny old Gestalt therapist writes:

> Although it is of course difficult to live something out and tell about it at the same time, this exclusivity is softened by our remarkable integrative skill... This deftness is... available for the co-ordination of living and telling, a feat which, in contradiction of Sartre's protagonist, we all accomplish everyday (Polster 1987)

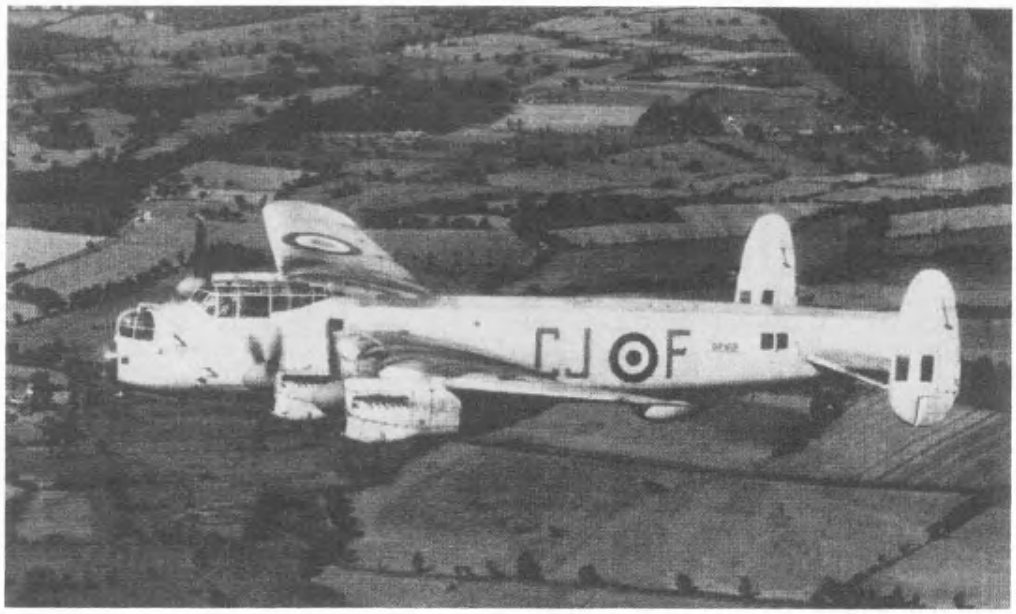
In this chapter, I seek to "deftly integrate" living and telling by careful selection and commentary on some of the pieces I have written about loving relationships over the past few years. Of course, separating my living inquiries into discrete chapters is an artifice. Whether I wish to argue for a single self or a multiplicity of selves (or both), it can hardly be denied that I am living <u>one</u> life. What I learn in one area inevitably feeds the whole - though I may be reluctant to apply such lessons uniformly! For example, I expect that writing about loving relationships will open up issues about healing that I intend to spotlight in a later chapter. Links with *The Mens Room* will also become apparent. Indeed, the letter to Chris, which closed that chapter, is

profoundly concerned with what it means to be in loving relationship with another; in this case, another man.

The Dragon Rider's Son

This picture, one of my most prized possessions, is an air-to-air shot of my father flying a post-war Lancaster bomber somewhere over East Anglia. It is just possible to make out his figure in the pilot's seat. A framed enlargement hangs in my living room – the Dragon Rider in his element.

I debate with myself; should I include this picture or not? What purpose does it serve? Is it just maudlin self-indulgence? I decide that it is important – this is how I picture him. This image of a sky-borne hero is how I have thought of him most of my life. It is etched deeply into my soul and still inspires me to follow my dreams. I am grateful for his life and wonder what it would have been like to have known him.

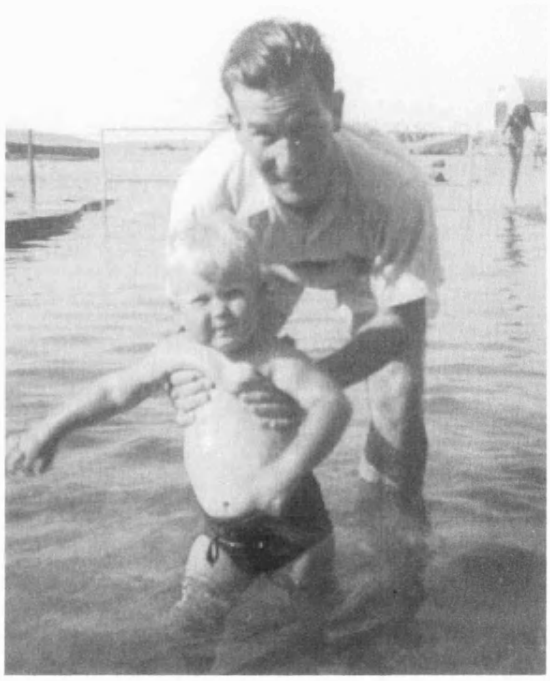


The first text I offer, *The Dragon Rider's Son,* is also my first explicit attempt to "story" my life. It came about in March 1995 during the early days of the *Making Tracks* men's group, when Ron Pyatt invited us to write and tell about our lives as if they were fairy stories. This is what I chose to say.

The Dragon Rider's Son

There was once a Dragon Rider – a warrior in the prime of his young manhood, fearless, joyful, strong and loving. He came from lowly stock and it was only the advent of a great war costing the lives of many dragon riders that allowed him to follow his dreams. When the war ended he continued to do what he loved best which was to fly the biggest of all the stately fighting dragons across the sky.

About this time he fell in love with a bright-eyed maid. She was still smarting from the loss of her first husband – a cruel and selfish man who had deserted her for another. His love healed her bitterness and they were very happy together. The years passed and brought first a son and then a daughter. His first-born son was the apple of his eye and he loved to dandle the young child on his knee, hold him in his arms and play with him by the edge of the sea.



One day the Dragon Master told him that they had discovered a new breed of dragon – smaller and faster than those he was used to flying – and that he had been specially chosen to ride one if he wished. The Dragon Rider eagerly accepted the challenge and flew his new steed each day. Its speed and manoeuvrability were exhilarating and he pushed harder and harder, swooping and climbing, to find their limits. Early one morning, as they dove earthward something snapped – perhaps a brittle wing bone, or perhaps he tugged the bridle too hard or too late. Whatever happened, and we may never know, they cartwheeled to the ground, smashed upon the rocks below and were consumed by the dragon's fire.

The Dragon Rider's widow was heart-broken and said to herself; "I must be strong and I must protect the little ones from this great pain." The Dragon Rider's son wept and had terrible nightmares. He could not understand why his father did not return. His uncles and aunts and his grandparents said to him; "You are the man of the house now. You must be strong too." The boy thought he could not be strong if he remembered his father and the pain of his going so he reached deep inside himself and shut the door to his past but in doing so he also closed the door to his heart and his true feelings. He said to himself; "I will endure. My task is to survive. Who will look after my mother and sister if I die?"

For two years the Dragon Rider's son lived at home. He had little joy because he was burdened by his sense of responsibility and because, deep down, he knew that he was too small and too weak to take care of his mother and sister. Still, he tried. At seven years of age his mother said to him; "You must go away from home now. You father chose a school for you before he died. You can better yourself there, rise above our station. Maybe you could become a lord or even a king." So the boy went, saddened and shocked at being sent away. Bullied and bewildered he begged to return home. "No," his mother said. "This will teach you how to become a man."

When the boy eventually returned, there was a new man at home. "This is my husband-to-be. He is a good man." "Is he a dragon rider too?" asked the boy. "No," said his mother. "He tends them on the ground." The boy said no more on the subject. The years passed and the boy grew up looking more and more like his father, but empty inside like a terracotta warrior – stiff and brittle. As he approached manhood, a courtesan (a mature woman), liking his appearance, fell in love with him. She bewitched him with her body and ensnared him in her home for a year and a day. He surrendered willingly – the more so because it was against the wishes of his mother and step-father.

One day the courtesan said; "This is not the place for you. Go now. You must find a wife and work of your own." He left, once more sealing the heart, which she had opened. He decided to marry the first woman he saw and that he would become a Guardian. Surely, in this way, he would become a man amongst men. The first woman he met came from a good family and she agreed to marry him. They set the date of the wedding once year thence and the Dragon Rider's son joined the Guardians. He watched the older men and being quick-witted and clever he learned how to copy them and even to anticipate their commands. "Carry on like this and you could become a Chief Guardian," they told him. He believed them and tried even harder.

After they were married in the presence of family and friends, his wife said to him; "We must have children of our own." And the Dragon Rider's son said; "As you wish." In the years that followed they had four children. The fourth was a sickly child, though much loved. So they lived together for twelve years until, one day, the Dragon Rider's son woke up and realised that he no longer knew what he was guarding, nor did he care. He no longer knew his wife, nor did he care.

At this time, a faerie woman came to the House of the Guardians. She looked into the eyes of the Dragon Rider's son and said; "I know you. I know your pain. I see your beauty. I will make you whole." Then and there, for the first time in his life, the Dragon Rider's son fell in love. For two years they met in secret places, stealing moments, living in an enchanted world. The Dragon Rider's son learned to cry, learned to laugh, learned to love and his heart opened once more. He learned to take pleasure in his body and hers. He learned that there was more to life and he learned that he had much to learn. Despite his happiness he felt torn in two and he knew that somehow he had to reconcile his faerie life with his human existence. So he said goodbye to his lover and left her grieving. They mourned each other for seven years.

Slowly, the Dragon Rider's son began to open his heart to his wife, his children, and his friends and to himself. He found many new ways to express himself – in words, in art, in music, in dance. He found much anger, much beauty, much sorrow and much joy in the world.

Still, he asked himself: "I am the Dragon Rider's son – but what is my name?"

How powerful such stories are, both to give coherence to experience and to convey meaning. I am astonished at how much it has to teach me. Of course, I already knew the elements of my own autobiography. The familiar sequence of events; my father's death in a plane crash, the misery of boarding school, a brief but glorious career as a toy-boy, marriage on the rebound, joining the police force, the almost automatic assumption of fatherhood, an operatically doomed love affair, a fragile reconciliation and simmering resentment. But, reading the story to the other men in the *Making Tracks* group, I came to see how much I still defined myself as my father's son. That final question, "But what is my name?" came completely unbidden and, at forty-five, provoked the stark realisation that the basic beliefs shaping my attitude towards loving relationships ("You can't have what you love and you can't love what you have") stemmed from the way I had tried to cope with the emotional trauma of losing my beloved father when I was four.

Then too, I could see how much power I had given to women in my life; my mother who "sent me away", the older woman who "enchanted" me, the "faerie woman" who cast a spell on me, my wife who "decided we should have children". How passive I had been, how helpless, and how resentful I had become. Since my father's death I had carried a sense of responsibility for others – a deeply ingrained sense of duty that had become a burden, that stopped me from asking the question "What do I really want?" and drove me to shape my life in response to others' needs.

Five years of Gestalt therapy[2], excellent though it was, had not freed me from these chains. The story showed me that I had to lay my father's ghost to rest, to come to a new relationship with him, in order that I might redefine myself from "the little boy whose father was killed when he was four" to a person in my own right, a product but not a prisoner of my past.

Father's Day

Three months later, on 18th June 1995, at a subsequent meeting of the *Making Tracks* group I was able to do this in a totally unexpected way. Shortly afterwards, sitting up late into the night, writing through my tears, I found expression for these events in the narrative poem *Father's Day.* Later still, at my instigation, my mother, my sister and I got together with my father's surviving brother to erect a headstone on dad's unmarked grave – a long overdue act of remembrance and family reconciliation.

I

Lying at the centre of the bridge, suspended
Over a torrent, blood-red and swollen by rain,
I sing to the river in hoarse, high-pitched tones
My song snatched away by the rushing water.

Scintillating light hypnotises and pulls me down,
Down and along – tumbling and flashing in the sun.
The tyranny of my conscious mind relaxes and
I surrender my tired ego to the joy of pure being.

[2] 1989-93

Ancient magic has power still in Roeburndale.
All things are possible in this timeless place
When men gather in hope and love of truth.
The valley invites me to receive its blessing.

II

I see my father's body, hacked and charred,
Caught on a rock, swaying in the current.
Dear God its him – Don't leave me now
I've been waiting for you all my life.

I stumble down the bank and into the water,
Wrap my arms around and drag him ashore.
On land he takes the shape of an old tree stump
Cut down near the root – limbs blackened by fire.

I too am stuck in the river and see myself,
A pale stone, lying motionless in shallow water.
His kindly voice instructs me to lift the stone
And place it in the crook of his wooden arms.

Together we sit, perched high on a boulder,
Tree-hearted man and stone-hearted boy
Looking over the valley to the hills beyond
Crying, laughing, hugging – lost in wonder.

III

Later, on the edge of sleep, I realise
That he has come for me to say goodbye,
Return him to the friendly earth and mourn
And, by releasing him, free myself.

I wake next morning knowing what I have to do.
It is Fathers Day and we men, encircling the ashes
Of last night's fire, each have stories that must be told,
Stories of fathers and sons, full of anger, pain and love.

We listen with open hearts and speak when moved,
Journeying together at our own speed - in ritual time.
My stomach knots and twists when my turn comes.
From the hillside, my father cries out to be buried

IV

The circle opens and, barefoot, I lead the way uphill
Through long wet grass, to my father's rocky shrine.
As we approach, a solitary jet passes high overhead.
It is his signal and I feel him come into the valley.

I reach out to the tree stump and it becomes him
The stone child he holds is me – I scream in anguish.
But this time I am not alone. I am held by strong,
Loving men who will not let me fall. I am four again.

Where are you daddy? Why don't you come home?
What am I gong to do? How could you do this?
I am totally alone in a dark place. I need you.
YOU'RE NO FUCKING USE TO ME DEAD!!!!!

Grief is messy. It all has to come out – the terror,
The incomprehension, the anger, the pain of loss
Before it is possible to forgive him for dying and
Love him again for who he was and who he is.

After what seems hours my sobbing ebbs away.
Looking up, I am surrounded by men's faces
Many tracked with their own tears, and mine
Flow once more but freely and without effort.

V

For a long time, I sit on the boulder, rocking gently
In the arms of another man whilst stroking my father,
Taking joy and strength from their presence,
Explaining what it is to be the Dragon Rider's son.

The story, like all good stories, changes in the telling.
I see for the first time that my father grieved for me
As I did for him, and that the courage and determination
Which killed him, nourished him too and could sustain me.

Our companions have gone ahead to dig the grave.
When they return in solemn procession, find us
Light-hearted and cheerful. I am ready and follow them
To a small, wild garden in sight of the bridge.

VI

There I place my father's image in the ground and,
Laying aside the stone, barehanded, cover him with soil.
Others share the task, placing sods for all our dead.
When all is done I am asked if I have anything to say.

My father could fly – and it cost him his life.
He was a strong man, a loving man, and fearless.
If he had been different, he might have survived, but
He died doing what he loved best and I am proud of him.

Man and boy, for forty years I have missed him.
Now he has come back to put fire in my belly,
To bequeath me some of his strength and courage,
To melt my stone heart and teach me to live.

His name was Raymond Geoffrey Mead.
He died in 1953, aged twenty-eight years.
Thank you for helping me bury him today.
Goodbye Dad – I love you – rest in peace.

VII

It is not quite finished. One more task remains
To free us both from this ancient tragedy.
Gathering up the stone child from the graveside
I return to the centre of the bridge where this began.

With a loud cry, echoed from the bank, I raise
The stone high above my head and cast it
Down where the current flows swift and deep.
At last, I am ready to live in the mainstream.

A great rush of energy surges through my body.
Hot tears well in my eyes as I feel the power
Of the moment and I am welcomed back to shore
By cheering, hugging, joyful, blessed fellow men.

The poem is both a record of events and a story of living inquiry. Telling and re-telling the story reinforces my sense of self. Turning to Erving Polster (Polster 1987) once more:

> People often summarise the events of their lives in a word or two [in my case the Dragon Rider's son] and then forget what it is they have summarised. At first, the special titles they give themselves are convenient symbols or guides in an otherwise incomprehensible existence. But the details, the substance of life, may be lost. When the story is told again and substance and title reconnected, congruence is restored and a sense of wholeness regained. (p71)

The poem also shows my willingness to trust my own process, to follow the winding path of the psyche and allow the possibility of connection with the "more than human world." (Abram 1997) Singing to the river in the conviction that I would be heard opened me to its reply. The valley brought me what I needed because I was ready to receive it. Some will dismiss this as fanciful nonsense, yet surely it is a natural concomitant of the participatory worldview described by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury in their introduction to *The Handbook of Action Research*: (Reason and Bradbury 2000)

> Human persons do not stand separate from the cosmos, we evolved with it and are an expression of its intelligent and creative force. As Thomas Berry (Berry 1992) puts it:
>
> > The universe carries within it a psychic-spiritual as well as a physical-material dimension... the human activates the most profound dimension of the universe, its capacity to reflect on and celebrate itself in conscious self-awareness

That day in Roeburndale, as during the burial ritual at Gaunt's House [3], I experienced myself participating directly in the psychic-spiritual and physical-material dimensions of the "more than human world".

Out of the Frying Pan

When I began this chapter, I had not expected to spend so long writing about my father but I can see now that coming to terms with his death fundamentally changed my attitude to being in loving relationships. The ethic of care and responsibility towards others that I had, untypically, learned as a boy and which had become distorted in adulthood into passive, dependent and sometimes manipulative behaviour towards women, was challenged by a growing sense of my own identity and of the right to choose for myself. I found myself in mid-life beginning to move more closely along the typical male trajectory described by Carole Gilligan (Gilligan 1993):

> Male and female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation as it defines and expresses the self, the latter of the ongoing process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community (p156).... These different perspectives are reflected in two different moral ideologies, since separation is justified by an ethic of rights while attachment is supported by an ethic of care (p164)

It was not a simple shift from one perspective to the other. I experienced enormous tension as my inner desire for freedom and self-expression outstripped my ability to negotiate change in what increasingly felt like the confines of my marriage.

In the opening section I described how, with Judi Marshall's and Jack Whitehead's encouragement, I wrote *Out of the Frying Pan* as a form of inquiry into these aspects of my lived experience. I want to include some extracts from it here – not in any sense as self-justification, nor as an apologia (I seek neither your approval nor your condemnation of my actions). Rather, I invite you to join me as I revisit the text to see what it has to say about some of the forms and practices of "living inquiry".

[3] See – *In Search of Spirit* in *The Men's Room*

The original, rather rambling text was some 14,000 words long. To have included it verbatim would have been self-indulgent (and, perhaps, have presumed too much upon your patience). So I have edited it pretty ruthlessly to a more reasonable 3,000 words, focusing on the events themselves and some of the immediate "reflections-in-action" (Schon 1983) that helped to shape them, whilst seeking to retain the substance and vitality of the original language. I have also been very conscious of Judi Marshall's "edge" (Marshall 1999) around personal stories and have chosen to exclude, from this more public document, some intimate material not central to the story that might have caused distress to my children and ex-wife.

Out of the Frying Pan

I arrived at Hawkwood in September 1996 - for the Collaborative Inquiry Conference - more open than ever before to the possibility of change. During the first afternoon, Peter Reason explained John Heron's hierarchy of learning and inquiry - moving from experiencing (being in the world) through representation and proposition to practical action. As the model unfolded, I placed myself in the lower bands of the pyramid - experiencing much, occasionally representing my experience through pictures, poetry, dance and writing, even coming to make propositions about right living - yet failing (I saw it as a deep personal failure) to change my life, to change my practice as a man, as a human being. I began to see that if I was serious about joining CARPP and pursuing a PhD then I would have to confront this barrier - certainly in my professional life and (I began to suspect) in my personal life too - in my relationships with myself and with others.

By the end of the first afternoon, I was bubbling in a state of intellectual fermentation, preparing to let go of some of my compulsion to control the world - which I had largely maintained by saying "No", by denying myself the experiences that might really change me. So it was in that state that the second significant event, or series of events, began. Early that evening I became reacquainted with Alison who I had met for the first time at an Open Space conference the previous week. Then, we had danced together - she inviting me to a local dance group and me asking her to help me put on a short dance workshop for conference participants.

As the evening wore on, numbers dwindled until, eventually, Alison and I were alone together. Gradually our chatter subsided and she said, "What are we doing here together... and what do you want to do about it?" It was a fateful moment. I knew that I stood at a crossroads. I could

deny my attraction and say "No" to life again or I could risk saying, "Yes". I chose to say "Yes". I shook with fear as I told her that I was not sure what we were doing together and that I wanted to spend the night holding her in my arms.

When the conference came to an end I felt the world closing in on me. Soon she would be gone. Was that it? What should I do? What did I want to do? I asked Alison to come with me for a short walk to find some privacy. We leaned on a pasture gate, the air smelling vaguely of cows, and I broke down and wept. I told her how frightened I felt, that something was about to snap and I did not know where I would end up. She comforted me, accepting my tears without pity or fear and asked me if I wanted to keep in touch. I said that I did not know what I wanted and asked her not to write to me - she agreed - I was due to go to Toronto within a week and would have time to sort myself out and decide what to do.

Returning to Hertfordshire, I entered my house. It no longer felt like home. Within a few hours I was in the bedroom, sobbing and trying to explain that I had been profoundly disturbed by the conference. I was desperately frightened by the prospect of living my life as inquiry - yet I knew that I had accepted the challenge. I felt as though I would die if I did not. I was facing a deep spiritual and existential crisis. I did not tell Sara about my meeting with Alison. I did not know whether I would ever see her again and did not want to cause either of us unnecessary suffering.

I struggled with my conscience for the next few days before flying to Toronto with our eldest son to visit my mother and stepfather. There I had a lot of time to think about my predicament. I sank into despair and a deep depression, which only lifted walking alone one day in the rain. As I hit bottom I was confronted by the choice between living the life my soul demanded or giving up. Put that starkly, there was only one conclusion. "I choose life," I said to myself, then out loud, then shouting - then breaking into a run as I felt the power and joy of this statement. I had made the crucial decision, passed the turning point, I knew that I would allow my life to change direction, that I was prepared to risk everything I had built over 25 years of work and marriage.

It was after that experience that I wrote to Alison - a long letter 20-30 pages perhaps, pouring out of me - streams of longing and desire - I want to see her again when I get back to England. I posted the letter from Niagara Falls the next day. It was done, the die was cast. I phoned Alison a few days after landing back in England and found that she had been very moved by my letter and that she wanted to see me again. I kept all this from Sara but could not hide my increasingly disturbed behaviour. My emotional mood swings became erratic, my libido

crashed and my grasp of reality became pretty tenuous. I retreated into myself for long periods, locking myself into our bedroom, going for solitary walks and drinking heavily.

Sara was scared and angry with me. Our children generally kept out of the way - I had little time or energy for them, so self-absorbed was I. My journal contains page after page of melancholic, agonised self-reflection. I withheld the truth from everyone - Sara, children, even myself. Somehow, I figured, there was a way out of this. If only I could find the right words, the right formula, I could make it all right for everyone.

I invented reasons to be away from home - conferences, meetings, dance classes - anything I could think of to be with Alison. I was obsessed with her, thinking about her in every waking moment, dreaming about her, writing to her, phoning, meeting clandestinely. Sara must surely have guessed? I held her, and the children, at arm's length, knowing that if I let them get too close I would not be able to hold it all together. I dare not let the cat out of the bag.

I did not want to hurt others and, despite the evidence of my eyes, pretended to myself that everything would somehow work out. I was constantly exhausted, stressed beyond measure, frequently had chest pains and shortness of breath. I could only concentrate enough for a few hours productive work each week. Sara was deathly pale and sick. The kids were fractious and edgy. My whole, carefully constructed, world was falling apart, going down the tubes and, perversely, I was willing it to happen. So often in the past I had pulled back, had avoided the possibility of real change - now I was determined to continue, to see it through.

Moving through, entering the void was all I could do. For months I lacked the ability to judge what was good or right. My rational mind deserted me, knowing perhaps that it could not serve me well. It was my heart, rather than my head, I most needed. It was as though when I sent Alison my letter from Niagara, I had cast myself over the waterfall in a barrel. For a time I ceased to have any sense of control over myself, or my life. What pained me most was the hurt, anger and fear I could see in Sara and in the children - them most of all.

After that, it was my body's reaction to events that most troubled me. Along with the stress symptoms I became sexually impotent for several months. Even now my sexual energy is low and it seems that I may have sacrificed a large part of it to the struggle. I nearly let myself off the hook then, glossing over the shame and humiliation of this experience. In some ways it has caused me to reassess my identity as a man. Like so many, I learned that to be a man means to be constantly ready for sex. If I am not and cannot, then how (else) can I be a man.

Working this out has been, indeed continues to be, one of the most challenging aspects of my relationship with Alison.

For a time these pressures threatened to overwhelm me. I could feel the over-stretched membrane between my fragile sanity and the madness that lay in wait, prowling in the darkness beyond. I also knew that, paradoxically, I had to ease the grip of my rational mind in order to survive. I recalled what I had learned about the power of surrender and of the universe to support us when most in need and turned to the *I Ching* for guidance.

At the turn of the year I retreated into a locked room to meditate and to determine how I would move into 1997. I stripped naked and sat cross-legged on the floor. In front of me I lit three candles for "life, love and happiness" and began to count my breath ... out... 1 ... in ...out... 2 ... in ... out ...3 ... in ... out, emptying my mind and letting my body take me to an altered state of consciousness. After some time, fifteen minutes or so, I brought my attention back to the room and carefully cast three coins six times to give the pattern of a hexagram - then consulted the *I Ching*. Before opening the book I decided to commit myself to act in accordance with whatever it said. I cast T'UNG JEN (Heaven over Fire) - the hexagram that, above all others, is concerned with personal relationships. I read:

Proper relationships, whether in love, work, family or friendship, must be founded on and conducted under proper principles in order to succeed ... kindness, humility, equanimity and openness ... The fundamental rule of the I Ching for the conduct of relationships is that they take place in the open. This means that every facet of a relationship should be seen as fair and correct by *everyone* concerned, not just yourself.

I squirmed - my relationships seemed to meet none of these criteria! I felt a wave of dread and excitement sweep over me. I did not know how or when, but I seemed destined to break out of the pattern of deceit that I had created into some new place. Somehow I had to decide what to and act upon it.

Within three weeks I had spoken to old friends at the Police Staff College at Bramshill and arranged a six-month attachment to work as an internal consultant. My boss, Peter Sharpe (Chief Constable of Hertfordshire) agreed to this. I had been frank with him and he, in turn, was tremendously sympathetic and helpful. I arranged to go in April once I had finished my current projects in Hertfordshire.

In the meantime I was thrashing around desperately, whole weekends spent in drunken depression and blazing rows. The children and I avoided each other. God knows what was going on for them. I know that they were very hurt by my behaviour which must have seemed

like a personal rejection. If anything, the prospect of freedom exacerbated my feeling of being trapped. I thought of some lines of Rilke and knew that I had to go on:

Sometimes a man stands up during supper
and walks outdoors and keeps on walking,
because of a church that stands somewhere in the East.
And his children say blessings on him as if he were dead.

And another man, who remains inside his own house,
dies there, inside the dishes and in the glasses,
so that his children have to go far out into the world
toward that same church which he forgot.

By March, my departure from the family home was fast approaching though still, ostensibly, temporary. Actually, I did need space for myself - the chance to be on my own, away from Sara, children and Alison. I needed to take stock, to check out what I was doing and for whom. I took myself to Spain for a week at Cortijo Romero, an "alternative" holiday centre in the Sierra Nevada mountains. There I meditated, slept, danced, walked in the hills, enjoyed Shiatsu massages, painted, ate and swam. It was a glorious week in which I reaffirmed my commitment to myself, to leading my own life, to being who I am. As so often, I was moved by the beauty and power of poetic language. A friend read Rilke to me in the original German and I composed a short poem in return.

How commonplace is this divinity
Delighting itself in infinite variety of form.
I, too, wantonly breathed into existence
For no other reason than to be what I am.

On the penultimate day our small group went on a pilgrimage to Osel Ling, a Tibetan Buddhist retreat centre high in the mountains. We had a steep climb on foot and as we went up I inwardly recited the following affirmation "I love myself as I move towards joy - and others are hurting." Sometimes the words triggered sobbing, sometimes they eased my heart and quickened my footsteps. On arrival we were given a glass of cold spring water and wandered around looking out at snow-capped peaks and eagles wheeling in the clear air below. The very earth on which I stood seemed to tremble with a benign energy as I made my way over to the Stupa (prayer circle). Walking clockwise round the altar I made three prayers; the first (for Sara and me) - "Let us separate with love and compassion", the second (for myself) - "Let me

love with an open heart", the third (for us all) - "Bring joy to all our lives". Then it was time go back.

For several weeks I returned to the family house in Harpenden each weekend, almost as though nothing had happened. Then, in the first week of May, I went to mid-Wales to speak at a conference on men's development organised by the NHS Wales Equalities Unit. Once more I found myself espousing the values of honesty and courage to an audience, and heard the hollow ring in my voice. Driving back to Newport to catch the train, I talked to a colleague about my dilemma. He, in turn, told me how he had come out as a gay man, the fear he felt, the problems he imagined, and the place he was in now - living his own life without apology or deception. I found him inspiring. Surely what I had to do could not be more difficult?

That weekend, on Sunday 4th May, I asked Sara if she would go away with me for a day to talk. She said that she could not manage a whole day, nor could she wait, it had to be that afternoon. I agreed, but first I went out for a long walk to gather myself together and to find my resolve. All that came to mind was the fourfold way - show up - tell the truth - listen - be open to outcome. That was it, all I could hold on to. I returned to our house, collected Sara and drove to Ashridge forest. We sat on a fallen tree and I said, "You asked me before if I had another relationship. I lied to you. I do."

There was a momentary pause then she exploded with rage, punching and kicking me. All I can do is brace myself against the blows and beg her to stop. Eventually the tirade subsides and the questions come, "Who is she? What is her name? How old is she? Does she have children? Have you had sex? Do you love her?" I answer as truthfully as I can. We are both sobbing. "It's not about her" I say, "It's about me. I have to live my own life. She is not the answer." When it comes down to it I am still not willing, of my own volition, to leave Sara. I don't know why I can't just say, "Its over." But I can't. It has taken all my reserves of courage just to tell her that Alison exists. I feel as though I have nothing left inside.

We got through the weekend somehow and I went back to Bramshill. Work was a haze and sleep impossible without whisky (I don't believe in pills). I went back to Harpenden at the weekends. We would talk for hours, going round in circles. I could not imagine life without Sara nor would I give Alison up. "What do you want?" Sara would ask. "I don't know" I would reply. We were stuck, cycling round the same issue time after time.

In late May, Sara and I talked once more. She is clear that she does not want to share me with anyone and I am adamant that I will not give Alison up. We both decide that it would be better

for me to stay away "for a couple of months". I tell the children that I will be staying at Bramshill and that they can visit me there if they would like to. They hear my words with a dumb animal pain that they cannot express and I leave.

A few weeks later, I telephone Sara having spent the weekend alone in my flat trying to write a letter explaining everything and failing to find the words. In the end I phone her and all I can do is to speak my truth, as I know it:

I am scared and unhappy. I am desperately sorry for the pain I am causing you. I will not go back to the past. I still feel a deep friendship and affection for you. I love our children and want to see them. Our relationship just does not work - the fit is bad and I doubt if we now have the capacity to change it. I regret my cowardice and deceit - for a long time I did not want to face the consequences of my actions, now I understand that the only hope is to face the truth whatever it is. I will not give Alison up. I do not know how to reconcile these truths and I have given up trying to do so.

Sara hears me out. She is, understandably, bitter and angry and it is she who makes the final decisive move. "I have thought about this very carefully. I never want to see you again." For all my "inquiry" and self-development it was she, not me, who had the courage to cut the Gordian knot. I suppose that I brought it about, manoeuvred her into it. I am sorry that I did not find it in me to be more direct. I did the best I could.

Perhaps the first thing to say about this text is that, despite my editing, it is still quite long. I wonder if this needs further justification? I think it is very important to share with you enough of the material upon which I am relying when I theorise or make claims to knowledge for you to make your own judgements. Like John Heron (Heron 1992) I dislike and distrust over-elaborate intellectual superstructures. Speaking of theories of the person he says:

> Its terms need to be thoroughly grounded, with a good bedrock quality, in deeply contemplated experience... Too much theory constructed on top of the phenomenal base is suspect (pp4/5)

It seems to me fitting, in any branch of human inquiry, and particularly when mining one's own experience, to theorise sparingly and make modest claims to knowledge, and then only on the basis of a substantial process of inquiry.

Second, I must acknowledge that as well as the personal, *Out of the Frying Pan* lies deep in emotional and psychological territory. Perhaps it is safe to assume that, unlike Donald Schon in his introduction to Bill Torbert's *The Power of Balance* (Torbert 1991), you are not disturbed by my refusal to respect conventional boundaries between personal and professional life. If I am wrong, you probably stopped reading long ago! However, I want to go further than this by joining Ruth Leitch and Christopher Day in explicitly promoting the contribution of emotional and psychological insight to reflective practice in action research. Yet even they, in an otherwise excellent article (Leitch and Day 2000), shy away from the practical implications of what they recommend. Thus, I thoroughly endorse the sentiment behind this statement:

> To avoid a well-rehearsed, but limited approach to reflection on feelings... the approaches derived from the worlds of psychology or psychotherapy are those which by-pass the rational in the first instance, and find access to the emotional and imaginary substrates of the teacher [or other researcher?] (p188)

But, oh how revealing the final sentence of their penultimate paragraph:

> Finally, there must also be a "fitness for purpose" to ensure that identified goals are not being lost in any *mindless self-exploration.* (p189 emphasis mine)

Who decides, I wonder, when such self-exploration is mindless? And, if admissible, what forms are considered appropriate to represent it? I argue that "living inquiry" must concern itself with both inner and outer dimensions – with self-exploration and our influence for good and ill in the world. Such concerns require far more than "a conceptual understanding of the nature of emotional understanding" (Ibid. p188). They demand that we commit ourselves to a deep experiential examination of our personal and professional lives – feeling as well as understanding our emotions, and using "artistically rendered forms" (Eisner 1993) to give expression to our creative imagination.

Having made these general points about the text, it is time to interrogate it for some specific examples of the forms and practices of my "living inquiries". Bill Torbert and

Judi Marshall have both written about their different attentional disciplines. Whilst Bill prescribes his as the basis of a new social science, I prefer Judi's more inclusive and permissive view:

> Each person's inquiry approach will be distinctive, disciplines cannot be cloned or copied. Rather, each person must identify and craft their own qualities and practices. The questioning then becomes how to do them well, how to conduct them with quality and rigour appropriate to their forms and how to articulate the inquiry processes and sense-making richly and non-defensively. (Marshall 2000)

First Person Inquiry

What leaps off the page at me is my obvious propensity for "first person inquiry" even in circumstances where collaborative "second person inquiry" would be more appropriate. I held on for eight months, trying to work things out myself, withholding the truth (even lying) rather than engage Sara in open dialogue. I might seek to justify this by citing the failure of our previous efforts at collaborative inquiry through marriage guidance counselling and couples therapy to achieve anything more than temporary respite. But I might equally acknowledge that I selfishly wanted to have my cake and eat it (both marriage and affair).

The Fourfold Way

Whatever the motive for delay, when I told the truth it became possible for us both to work towards some sort of resolution. In May and June, despite (or perhaps because of) our pain and Sara's anger, we communicated with ferocious honesty. At that stage in the text I refer to "the fourfold way". I borrow this phrase from Angeles Arrien's book of the same name (Arrien 1992) which I came across shortly after publication. A cultural anthropologist, Arrien draws on the wisdom traditions of native Americans and other indigenous peoples to offer a traditional form for "right living" based on archetypal energies and symbols associated with the four cardinal directions arrayed as a circle or medicine wheel.

I recognise the potential for cultural imperialism, however I believe it is possible to use the form respectfully and non-invasively. Impressed by its accessibility and "profound simplicity", I have found attempting to behave in accordance with its strictures extremely demanding. The form enables us to access the human resources of power, vision, love and wisdom through right action, right placement, right speech and right timing. Arrien encapsulates these as: "Show up. Tell the truth. Pay attention. Be open to outcome". And it seems to me that these few words capture the essence of effective human inquiry.

She also recommends four corresponding meditational attitudes to develop and strengthen our capability for right living; standing (as in Qi Gong and Tai Chi), walking (or jogging), lying (as in relaxation and yoga), and sitting (as in zazen meditation). I have practised all of these exercises (though irregularly and in varying degrees) over the past fifteen years. Interestingly, Bill Torbert recently wrote (Torbert 2000) about the need for such exercises in developing the qualities of attention required by first person Action Inquiry:

> I cannot emphasize strongly enough how unknown such exercise is generally, nor how reliant we must therefore be on personal guidance by longtime practitioners of attention exercise in ongoing traditions of attentional inquiry. Reading about it does not generate the capacity for doing it. Reading about it does not necessarily generate a very reliable wish to generate the capacity for doing it.

Entering the abyss

Paradoxically (in the light of my persistent reluctance to embrace the loss of control inherent in second person inquiry with Sara) the text also reveals my willingness to enter the abyss of incoherence and unknowing. This is probably most apparent in the moment I told Sara the truth about my affair and in the metaphor of casting myself over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

Reflecting on teacher's stories of becoming action researchers, Maggie MacLure (MacLure 1996) considers the common assumptions that appear to underlie the narratives:

> ...that a life story will be linear, directional, cumulative, coherent and developmental; that the past will help to explain the present (and not vice versa); that transitions are resolutions of boundary problems, and contradictions can be transcended; that the self is singular, discoverable through reflection, sits at the centre of our story... persists over time and thus itself provides coherence to the narrative...

and then asks whether we should abort the mission to explain our lives and put ourselves into the abyss of *différance*. But surely neither of these positions is absolute? There are times when our lives more or less hang together and we can make a kind of sense of them (the drive to do so is very strong). There are other times when "things fall apart, the centre cannot hold"[4] and the relationships, structures that hold our lives together, even our sense of identity, collapse or dissolve.

In Gestalt psychology[5], healthy organismic functioning requires that we learn to move fully and freely round the cycle of experience; through sensation, awareness, mobilisation of energy, action, full contact, satisfaction and withdrawal into the fertile void. Until we let go of our existing patterns of understanding and enter liminal space we cannot fully embrace emerging new possibilities. Without death there can be no rebirth: without winter, no spring: without Persephone, no Demeter. So, I am claiming that these examples (telling Sara the truth, going over Niagara Falls in a barrel, even consulting the *I Ching*) represent important aspects of my practice of living inquiry. They are Eleusinian moments of letting go, of surrender, of conscious unknowing.

Tortoise Mind

The text also describes an occasion when I deliberately took "time out" from my immediate circumstances by going to my favourite Spanish mountain retreat, Cortijo Romero. This has become an annual event – a week of recuperation and renewal. I

[4] W.B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*
[5] Which I studied from 1991 to 1995 for a postgraduate Diploma in Organisational Consulancy

"defocus" my attention, stop striving to understand and allow new ideas, images and insights to emerge. There, away from the hurly burly, I can recognise these green shoots more easily and nurture them through meditation, creative writing, painting, prayer and ritual.

There is something important here about building psychological spaces into the inquiry process for the "tortoise mind" to gestate. Guy Claxton (Claxton 1997) warns against the danger of premature articulation or "how thinking gets in the way of learning" (p28). Drawing on a wealth of clinical research, he demonstrates how noticing, pondering and mulling without forcing a conclusion help our unconscious mind process the complexities of difficult problems. Imagination cannot be rushed – the muse demands to be entertained. I contrast this fostering of unconscious mind with Torbert's call for "consciousness in the midst of action"(Torbert 1991). Of course, both are necessary and both, I assert, are evident in *Out of the Frying Pan.* As Claxton says (Claxton 1997):

> If the passive acceptance of not-knowing overwhelms the active search for meaning and control, than one may fall into fatalism and dependency. While if the need for certainty becomes intemperate, undermining the ability to tolerate confusion, then one may develop a vulnerability to demagoguery and dogma, liable to cling to opinions and beliefs that may not fit the bill, but which do assuage the anxiety. (p6)

Sacred Mirrors

In my use of the *I Ching* to help me decide how to act in relation to my marriage I was, as I subsequently discovered, following in Bill Torbert's footsteps (Torbert 1991). Reading how he too consulted the *I Ching* in similar circumstances enables a useful comparison to be made. Bill found, despite his "extreme scepticism" that the ambiguity of the commentary on his chosen hexagram crystallised into clear guidance when read to him by another. Not having another to read to me I had to open myself, through careful preparation, to receive the message. For me this is a sacred process and I choose to believe in the possibility of accessing universal wisdom in such ways. As Peter Reason says in his essay *Reflections on Sacred Experience and Sacred Science* (Reason 1993):

> We *can* choose the mirror we hold, the aspects of the cosmic dance to which we wish to make ourselves available (p277)

I have found that when I ask the oracle for guidance with acceptance and humility, a response is always forthcoming – sometimes clear and unambiguous, sometimes confusing. I think of this as the universe dropping a grain of sand into the super-saturated solution of my unconscious mind, precipitating the formation of a crystalline structure. I have a sense of allowing this to happen rather than making it happen – of getting out of my own way so I can hear the voice of my soul. These things should never be done lightly: they are demeaned by such treatment and withhold their magic. Do not consult the oracle unless you are willing, without reservation, to hear its answer.

Occasionally my living inquiries focus directly on the spiritual (as, for example, in the events described by *In Search of Spirit*[6]). More often, spiritual and sacred exercises form part of inquiries into other aspects of my life. The use of ritual and ceremony to create transformational spaces is an important aspect of my inquiry practice.

Imaginary friends

I am also struck by the significance accorded to metaphor and imagery in my inquiry process. In *Out of the Frying Pan* this is probably most apparent in the inclusion of Rilke's poem *Sometimes a Man Stands Up.* When I say "I thought of some lines of Rilke and knew that I had to go on," it is a literal statement not a fanciful embellishment. I was (and remain) profoundly affected by the images in the poem – especially the "church that stands somewhere in the East." Reading it for the first time in James Hillman's *The Soul's Code* (Hillman 1996) starkly illuminated my predicament and provided a positive framing for what I had been thinking of as the selfish abandonment of my family merely to be with another woman. I too was being called to follow a destiny I could not articulate. I felt as though my physical life was at stake. My soul was sickening and I knew that I must either follow the call or become increasingly trapped (like Hillman's stereotypical modern father):

[6] See *The Mens Room*

> ... in a cage of... delusions that crush the angel's wings. Without inspiration, what's left is bare, aimless ferocity. Without desire for an ideal, what's left is lustful fantasy and the seduction of free-floating images that find no anchor in actual projects. Present in body and absent in spirit, he lies back on the couch, shamed by his own daimon for the potentials in his soul that will not be subdued. (Ibid. p81)

I have been much influenced by the primacy Hillman attributes to the imagination and the poetic basis of mind (Hillman 1983) and to the power of metaphor to generate new understanding and change our view of reality. I seek to cultivate my imaginal and metaphorical capacities through photography, painting, creative writing, poetry and other expressive arts. I do so not to claim the status of a dilettante artist but to honour my creative self and the world I inhabit. Often, what comes out of this work challenges (though sometimes supports) my worldview. The short poem *How common is this divinity* in my narrative both affirms my "right" to be who I am and deflates my ego by recognising the presence of the divine in all forms of existence.

Occasionally, what comes out challenges and supports other people's understanding in helpful ways. For example, Paul Roberts[7] wrote to me about this in March this year (2000).

Paul's thoughts on my use of metaphor

As I said on the film weekend I think you have a real talent for metaphor. There are two occasions when you have used metaphor which have had a profound effect on me and stayed with me as images which have reoriented the way I have thought about situations and people.

The first was the occasion in the supervision group when I expressed anger with Jack for what I felt was his way of invalidating the exploration of my depression and his view that this was not relevant to his educational practice. You were quiet initially whilst we both spoke and then, at an appropriate time, you offered the story of your experience as a young policeman and the image of an unexploded bomb and the issue of where to draw the cordon around it. You also commented that you thought we did not as a supervision group need to draw the cordon at such a distance. I thought this was a powerful way of using an image to contain and recognise

[7] A fellow member of Jack Whitehead's CARPP4 supervision group

both Jack and mine points of view. This seemed to me to allow a creative appreciation and holding of the issues we were exploring. As I write this I also realise I am developing my own thinking. There is something interesting here about the way that an image or metaphor can be used as a crucible to contain a situation in which there is conflict and strong feelings.

The other occasion was the image you offered in an email of your experience of supervision with Jack in which you described him as an anvil which suggested to me that the process of supervision could allow us to forge our own views against the substance and solidity of his views and also affirmed the importance of heat in this process. This image really shifted my view of Jack away from rigidity and oppression to something that I could come up against which would be a creative, enabling and shaping process. As I write this, I think further there is an important dimension here about men at their best which the image of an anvil beautifully captures - how can we strongly challenge and come up against one another, especially against men in authority without the consequences of that being retaliation, disengagement or covert undermining?

I remember both occasions well. Each time, the central image (the cordon around the unexploded bomb, and the anvil) arose spontaneously, clear and sharp. Simply offering them as metaphors for the situations Paul describes was enough.

Fascinated by the power and effect of such interventions, I recently looked to Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) for a deeper understanding. They argue that metaphor is far more than a linguistic device and, after a detailed analysis of how we use metaphor to give coherent structure to our experience, they conclude:

> ... metaphor is a matter of *imaginative rationality*. It permits an understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another, creating coherences by virtue of imposing gestalts that are structured by natural dimensions of experience. New metaphors are capable of creating new understandings and, therefore, new realities. (p235)

The close relationship between image and metaphor to which I alluded earlier is here stated quite unequivocally. Both are intrinsic to the practice of my inquiries.

Choose life

At the time, I saw myself struggling to live with greater authenticity and integrity. The two words, problematic as they are in terms of a post-modern or constructivist view of the self, were nevertheless very important to me. I defined them very simply in my Diploma/MPhil transfer paper:

> By integrity, I mean wholeness – being able to retain my essential sense of identity in all aspects of my life. By authenticity, I mean being true to myself – to live in accordance with my needs, values and desires (as I understand them) whilst striving to minimise the adverse consequences of this for others.

I am less attached to them now. I can better see how they feed into a stereotypical male agenda – typified perhaps by Denys Finch-Hatton's speech from *Out of Africa* at the head of this chapter:

> Karen, I'm with you because I choose to be with you. I don't want to live someone else's idea of how to live. Don't ask me to do that. I don't want to find out one day that I'm at the end of someone else's life. I'm willing to pay for mine... to be lonely sometimes... to die alone if I have to... I think that's fair.

It is a heroic vision of a life lived on one's own terms (which I still find attractive despite greater awareness of the social and familial forces that produce such conditioning) but *Out of The Frying Pan* is not a "victory narrative" (MacLure 1996) or a heroic tale. It is a story of indecision, deception, backtracking and uncertain outcomes. As an act of self-presentation it is partial, fragmented and biased. The only voice that speaks directly to you is mine. Alison (my lover) and Sara (my ex-wife) speak little, and only through me. Our children's voices are not heard at all. It is an example of living inquiry and also a story of "unreasonable behaviour" sufficient to constitute grounds for divorce. And yet...

And yet, what still rings clear and true for me (even acknowledging our human capacity for self-deception) is my commitment to move in the direction of life-affirming energy, no matter what the cost. I was once told that a baby stays in the

womb until it becomes toxic, until the choice is between risking being born or dying. I don't know whether or not it is true, it doesn't really matter. It is still a powerful metaphor. I had spent years finding temporary ways of reducing the toxicity of my surroundings at home and work, just to get by. This time, I chose to make things so bad that something had to happen. It was a painful and cackhanded way of doing it but it was a choice for life.

In *Out of the Frying Pan*, and other texts, I find evidence to support the claim that my living inquiries (whether first, second or third person) are directed towards the pursuit and encouragement of life-affirming energy. Thus, I can happily endorse Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (Reason and Bradbury 2000) when they say:

> ... the primary purpose of action research is not to produce academic theories based on action; nor is it to produce theories about action; nor is it to produce theoretical or empirical knowledge that can be applied in action; it is to liberate the human body, mind and spirit in the search for a better, freer world.

At another point in *Out of Africa*, Karen Blixen says, "Sometimes, if the Gods want to punish us, they give us what we most want." Having got what I wanted, an independent life, I had to learn afresh what it means to be in, and out of, loving relationships – especially with our children. In the next section I want to explore how I came to realise as Carole Gilligan says, in marked contrast to the quotation at the head of the chapter, that:

> The truths of relationships, however, return in the rediscovery of connection, in the realisation that the self and other are interdependent and that life, however valuable in itself, can only be sustained by care in relationships. (Gilligan 1993) p127

Into the Fire

Sara and I separated in June 1997 and divorced the following year. Four years after these events, I live on my own – more or less contentedly – at Bramshill. The anguish and bitterness have dissipated and we are, if not friends, at least on friendly terms with each other. Relationships with the children have also healed. They seem

happy to spend time with me and I find that I can give them a quality of attention that I had not been able to give when we lived together. Then I felt claustrophobic and resentful of their demands. Now I look forward to being with them and do my best to be an active and engaged father as they enter adulthood (Nicky is 26, Jamie 23, Georgie 19 and Tom 18 years old).

The intervening years have been full of mistakes, clumsy efforts at reconciliation, moments of tenderness, acceptance and forgiveness. Much of my waking (and dreaming) time has been spent puzzling about how to re-establish loving relationships with those whose trust and confidence I betrayed in order to "become my own person". I want to write about this partly because it reflects my deepening understanding of "second person inquiry" but mostly because the story demands to be told. Much has happened since 1997 and I cannot bring myself to leave us all stranded at the end of *Out of the Frying Pan.* I need to come full circle to complete the gestalt.

How to tell the story, though, is problematic. Like Erv Polster (Polster 1987), I feel:

> ... [somewhat] overwhelmed by the problem of extracting a simple account of something that matters out of a universe of gradual developments. In a sense, life goes by very slowly while stories - even the longest novels - are quick. The story is an organising agent, selecting a few events from the many which happen and giving them coherence (p69).

I am conscious that I must select carefully since:

> the mere writing down of that meagre remainder of all that could be written guarantees that it will be given special significance (p14).

After much thought I have decided to focus on what seem to be key turning points; shifts in perception, changes in behaviour, memorable events. I propose to do so without much overt theorising, joining together pieces of original texts (journals, creative writing, and reflections) with new material to form a mosaic revealing some of the "rediscovery of connection" in this phase of my living inquiry. I like this

metaphor of a new picture made out of old scraps and fragments: a picture in which the images are clear but the outlines indistinct – the *bricoleur* as creative artist.

Doing time

The first eighteen months were the hardest. I was guilt-ridden, frightened by the force of Sara's righteous anger and deeply affected by the children's distress. Jamie said little, Georgie refused to speak to me and Tom could not bring himself to visit for several months. He was barely fourteen at the time and I vividly recall feeling both distraught and proud of his courage when he rang up to tell me that he loved me but that he was too angry and upset to see me for a while. He promised to let me know when he felt differently and, true to his word, called about six months later to say that he was ready to see me again (though not to stay in my flat). Jamie was cool and distant. Nicky made a positive effort to accommodate the change; "I love you Dad. I hate what you have done but I do not want it to spoil our relationship." She asked to meet Alison and did so twice, without incident, before deciding that was enough.

Sara and I did not set eyes on each other for three years and avoided telephone contact except when absolutely essential. Our lawyers fought each other over the financial settlement, their negotiating ploys escalating our mistrust and mutual suspicion. We each supported ourselves through short term counselling. I went alone to Relate for advice on the practicalities of separation (8-10 sessions in all) which helped me identify that I wanted a divorce and suggested ways of maintaining contact with the children (phone calls, letters, small gifts) even when they did not want to reciprocate. "Just keep on letting them know that you love them and wait for them to come round," advised Jane, the Relate counsellor. Sara returned to a gestalt therapist we previously worked with and I am sure she found this helpful in coming to terms with the separation.

The divorce came through in September 1998, by which time Tom and I were back on sufficiently good terms to go to Disneyland, Florida for a week. After a couple of uncomfortable days expecting him to adjust to my pace and preferences, it was clear that we were not really enjoying ourselves. I had a long, hard, talk with myself. "Who is this holiday for?" The answer was pretty obvious, "Tom." From that moment on, I

slowed down and put myself in service of his needs. The more I asked what he wanted and listened to what he said, the more considerate of my wishes he also became and the more fun we both had. It may seem strange to you, especially if you have children of your own, but that simple self-evident truth came as a revelation to me. When I genuinely engage in dialogue with my children they almost always astonish me with their intelligence, maturity and generosity. Things generally go wrong when I think I know best.

A Bridge Too Far

Despite our wonderful holiday, things were still a bit tense between Tom and me and the situation with the others was unchanged. By the spring of 1999, I was becoming frustrated by the constant fragmentation of my life as I shuttled between Bramshill, Brighton and Harpenden to ensure that Alison and the children did not meet accidentally. I sometimes felt like the farmer ferrying the fox, the geese and the corn back and forth across the river to avoid them eating each other.

Eventually I raised the idea of meeting Alison with Tom. He acknowledged the possibility, though without much enthusiasm, and I began to think how I could bring this about. I talked to divorced and remarried friends about this dilemma. Should I take the responsibility for doing this? Was it fair to leave the decision to Tom? It would be difficult for him to agree without feeling disloyal to Sara. If I unilaterally arranged a meeting, at least he would not have to shoulder that burden. Sometimes, I reasoned, parents to have to take such decisions on behalf of their children. My friends supported this view and I persuaded myself that it was the right thing to do. He would be able to handle it. It would be OK.

A few weeks later, I arranged for Alison to call by unannounced while Tom was visiting me at Bramshill. He was shocked when I told him that she would be arriving in fifteen minutes. Tears welled into his eyes; "You might have told me," he said. You should have given me some notice. I would still have been here." "Sorry," I said. "I should have told you. I did not want you worrying about it. Will you be OK?"

After that it seemed to go quite well. The three of us went to a pub for lunch, Tom and Alison chatting animatedly about his new computer. At one point he turned to me, *sotto voce,* "I think I'm handling this pretty well Dad, don't you?" "You are amazing", I replied. I was so proud of him. He had displayed great maturity and sensitivity and we had cleared an important hurdle together... or so I thought until I telephoned my oldest daughter Nicky a few days later.

She was incandescent with rage, accusing me of a complete betrayal of trust. She told me that Tom had been very upset when he got home, tearful and hurt. She tore into me. She and Tom had done their best to support me in my new life and I had betrayed their trust. What possible reason could there be for introducing Tom to Alison apart from my own convenience? He had the absolute right to decide himself if and when he wanted to meet her. She hardly ever saw me, nor did Tom. How could I make time for Alison and not for them. "You are mad, completely mad".

I was shocked. Clearly I had made a mistake, a serious error of judgement. Upsetting Tom was the last thing I wanted to do. I wanted to refute her accusations, yet they contained some kernels of truth. I had put Tom is a difficult position. He had not had any choice in the matter. I did spend very little time with them. I tried to hold my ground without being either defensive or aggressive towards her. I thanked her for letting me know Tom had been upset - otherwise I would not have known. Then I put the phone down and waited a few minutes to gather myself before calling Tom.

"Nicky tells me that you were very upset when you got home on Saturday"... "Yes, I was."... "I didn't know, I thought it all went OK. "... "You must have known - I was crying."... "I saw you were a bit shaken when I told you Alison was coming, but I thought you handled it all brilliantly."... "I didn't want to be rude, I couldn't say anything." I apologised for not giving him the chance to decide for himself and promised that there would be no more surprises. I asked if he knew what he wanted to do about seeing me again and he told me he would think about it. I said, "You know I love you Tom, don't you?" "Yes, I do." he replied. I felt obliterated. How could I have got it so wrong? How could I have misunderstood so completely?

I suppose it is pretty obvious in hindsight. Yet again I had tried to sort things out myself: lots of "first person inquiry" – seeking advice, reflecting, making decisions – but failing to realise that I had to meet Tom halfway, had to really listen to his point of view. In my frustration I had forgotten the lessons I thought I had learned with Tom in Disneyland only six months previously. My good friend Peter Neall tried to comfort me; "The main thing is that your kids do express their feelings to you. You acknowledge making mistakes. You let them know you love them. You did not run away. You should be proud of them and of yourself." I was proud of them but ashamed at my own stupidity and lack of consideration.

All kids are beautiful

A short time later on holiday in Cortijo Romero, the upset with Tom and Nicky was still weighing heavily on my mind. Instead of breaking down barriers, my intervention had thrown our relationships into chaos. Surely this was the nadir, things had to get better? I wondered what could I do to put them right.
During the week I ran a short writing workshop for fellow guests with a freefall writing exercise beginning; "Orchids are beautiful but I prefer..." Several members of the group had heard me say instead; "All kids are beautiful but I prefer..." I wondered what my own spontaneous response would have been to that opening so I took up my pen and wrote the following without stopping:

All kids are beautiful, but I prefer... the sound of my own voice, the freedom to live uninhibited by their presence. I prefer my own company, I prefer to be with Alison, to go on holiday, to work, to write, to study. All these things and more I do and (maybe) as a result, I spend very little time with my own children. I arranged my life to suit my own priorities and the truth is, in practice (though not in theory) they come pretty low down the list. I have seen Tom only once per month and seen Nicky only twice since Christmas, the last time being in February. She is right to upbraid me. I'm missing out on her pregnancy and she's missing out on my attention. How to be a good enough father after divorce? I left Sara (and our children) in order to change my life, in order to have the space (physical and psychological) to be my own person - whatever that means - and, after two years, I have not worked out how to re-relate to them. All kids are beautiful ... especially my own. My life is poorer for being with them so rarely. If I really mean this, I have to change my priorities to put them first more often.

The answer was staring me in the face. If I really wanted to "re-relate" to my children I had to reach out to them, to love them unconditionally. I had to be willing to meet them on their terms, on their ground. I was determined that this would be the turning point. I would do everything in my power to repair the damage I had done to our loving relationships and the starting point would be to reframe these as our relationships with each other and not simply my relationships with them.

I wrote to them all from Spain, a letter each, explaining why I had manoeuvred Tom into meeting Alison and apologising for my mistake. I told each of them – Nicky, Jamie, Georgie and Tom – that I love them and expressed my longing for closer contact. I made no demands of them and bided my time. After several weeks of telephone contact, Tom said that he wanted to see me again (I promised no more surprises) and Georgie said she would like to meet for dinner.

We met in Harpenden in late July, at the end of the school term and I took her out to an Italian restaurant, feeling very proud of my beautiful, grown up (seventeen-year-old) daughter. She brought me her school report to show me and I gave her a copy of an article I had just had published (she had asked: "What do you do now Dad?")

She asked some very direct questions about the separation and told me that when I left home for Bramshill she knew I would not be coming back. She could not understand what I had done and felt as betrayed and abandoned as Sara. This was tough stuff to hear, but honest and clearly justified by events. I could not argue or defend what I had done – simply repeat that I loved her and that I had done the best I could (even though it had been a terrible mess). After that, she occasionally came out to the car to say hello when I went to Harpenden to pick up Tom and talked to me, rather than pass me straight on to Tom if she happened to pick up the phone when I called.

Tom asked me if he could stay with me at Bramshill during the summer holidays. He wanted some work experience and I arranged for him to work in the Communication Unit, paying him a regular wage out of my own pocket. It was a good time for both of us. We took a week off together and I drove him and a friend to Centreparcs in Sherwood Forest where I became the sole cook, bottle-washer, general factotum,

entertainment manager and "team coach". Tom's movement disorder makes many physical activities difficult. Nevertheless, he is very competitive and, together, we won the Pairs Ten Pin Bowling contest, beating fifteen other couples for our "gold" medal. That is probably the only award he has ever won for sporting achievement and winning it together is something I will never forget.

New Life

As I write, I have a picture in front of me – my stepfather Harry, cradling my granddaughter, Poppy (his great granddaughter). The image is both joyful and poignant. Although the baby smiles and looks up at him, he is blind and cannot see her. I know he is saddened by that loss, and I feel it too. Mostly, though, I experience enormous joy from looking at the picture. The photograph was taken in my flat at Bramshill last November (1999) when, against all expectation, my elderly parents travelled from Toronto to welcome Poppy into the world.

A day or two after their arrival, Nicky and Poppy came to stay and I also invited Tom, Jamie and Georgie to visit along with my Uncle Tony and Aunt Jean for lunch and general celebration. That is when the photograph was taken, while they were all gathered under my roof; the first "normal" family event I had experienced for three years. I was quite surprised when Georgie accepted my invitation to visit the flat. I

guess she thought the others would provide some moral support. It cannot have been easy for her – my flat is right next door to our old family house at Bramshill. "I like your flat", she told me. "I thought it would be all cold and lonely but it's not".

Jack Whitehead says that he can detect some special quality of energy when I speak about Poppy. There is no doubt that her vibrant and demanding presence lies close to the heart of this movement towards family reconciliation. We all adore her, so we all have that in common and that shared love brings us all closer together. Thinking of her gives me a wonderful sense of pleasurable anticipation about the coming years. I imagine myself playing with her, telling her stories, giving her little gifts and treats. Looking forward in this way contributes enormously to my sense of well being in the world and of the joyful possibilities of elderhood.

Poppy's arrival even began to thaw the frost between Sara and me. Though it was some time before we would be ready to meet face to face, we could at least acknowledge, on the telephone, our joy and delight in seeing our daughter blossoming into young motherhood. "Whatever went wrong, we must have done some things right," I thought.

Reconnections

The children and I continued to have closer contact. I took Jamie out to dinner, at his request, to celebrate his twenty-first birthday and we spent the occasional weekend together. I visited Poppy and Nicky in her London flat, drove regularly to Harpenden to see Tom on Friday evenings and spoke to Georgie whenever I could. By Christmas I began to hope that Sara and I would one day come together again as parents and grandparents.

In May (2000), at Cortijo Romero once more, another shift occurred. Creative writing again stimulated an important insight about how I had withheld myself in our marriage and what I needed to do to become more open and available. I had written a piece about looking through a collection of family pictures that my mother had kept from me as a child. I understood that it had been too painful for her to share them with me after my father's early death but I still resented her "stealing my childhood" in this

way. It meant so much to me to see for the first time, at thirty-five, pictures of my father holding me and playing with me in the water.

As I read what I had written to the other members of the group, I suddenly remembered that I too had a hoard of unseen photographs and it sent a shiver down my spine to realise how closely I was reproducing the patterns of secrecy learned as a child. I had always taken family snaps on high days and holidays but there came a time during the last five or six years of our marriage when I stopped getting them developed. The rolls of film steadily accumulated in a desk drawer until there were thirty or forty of them and even I thought it was a bit strange. Perhaps I could not bear the contrast between these selectively happy images and my own misery. When I moved out, the rolls of film came too, like so many family ghosts following me to my new home. I determined to break the pattern. I would get the films developed and share the pictures with Sara and the children – after all, whatever images they contained belonged to them as well.

Returning from Spain, I took a carrier bag full of films to Boots and waited a week for the hundreds of pictures to be printed. Then I sat down and went through them one by one; images of Sara and me laughing together, of excited children dressed for parties, of old friends now out of contact, of familiar domestic scenes. It was enough, more than enough, to penetrate my armour. For the first time I allowed myself to feel the loss of our marriage. We had loved each other once, in our own way. Not all those twenty-five years were bad. We had built a house, a home and a family together and I needed to grieve the passing of half a lifetime spent under the same roof.

I had fifty or sixty of the best pictures copied for myself and then sent all the originals to Sara with a letter saying what they meant to me and inviting her and the children to enjoy them too. She did not reply straight away but thanked me a few weeks later on the phone. Her tone had changed – or perhaps I was now ready to hear the softness and affection that had always been there. Gradually the warmth returned to our conversations about the children and her new home until today when, literally as I write these words, the phone rings and she is asking me to bring her some cuttings of from my rosemary plants for her garden. How apt, I think. In Victorian "flower language" rosemary stands for remembrance.

In August, Sara invited me to her house for Poppy's first birthday party and we have met frequently since then, driving children back and forth while both Tom and Georgie stayed with me for the summer, at Bramshill. Together, we are facing up to the implications of Tom's diagnosis with Freidreich's Ataxia and I am experiencing a renewed, and much happier and healthier, sense of family. Things will never be the same as before – I don't think anyone wants that – but paradoxically, now we are separate, I realise how much these relationships mean to me. I begin to see the children as people in their own right and I see again the qualities that drew me to Sara in the first place. I hope that we become good friends.

I close this chapter with a poem by Alfred D'Souza passed to me by a friend about three years ago when I was writing *Out of The Frying Pan.* It seems just as appropriate now as I reflect on subsequent events.

> For a long time it seemed to me
> that life was about to begin - real life.
> But there was always
> some obstacle in the way.
> Something to be got through first,
> some unfinished business,
> time to be served,
> a debt to be paid.
>
> Then life would begin.
>
> At last it dawned on me
> that these obstacles
> were my life.

Commentary

In this commentary on *Postcards from the edge*, I focus on another three of the twelve distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity described in *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*, exemplifying their embodiment in, and emergence from, my practice of *living inquiry.* I have chosen Reflection and Reflexivity, Change and Transformation, and Courage as particularly, though not exclusively, relevant to this chapter and I invite you to bear them in mind throughout your reading of the thesis.

Reflection and Reflexivity: As John Dewey[8] tells us, it is reflection that differentiates the continuous flow of experience, identifying and giving coherence to what is significant and this whole text is characterised by multiple layers of reflection and reflexivity. In *Postcards from the Edge*, for example, there are at least three layers (with this commentary as the fourth, perhaps). Each layer of reflection takes me further away from the immediacy of the events themselves but I think you will also see how each perspective also enriches and deepens the process of sense-making.

First, there are retrospective narratives such as *Out of the Frying Pan*, written to document and make sense of the events surrounding my separation and divorce. Another example is *All kids are beautiful*, a piece of "freefall" reflective writing so powerful that it spurred me into immediate action to re-engage with my estranged children.

Second, there are further reflections on these experiences which make explicit the embodied qualities and practices of my inquiry process. In this chapter, the sections following *Out of the Frying Pan* where I identify and explore several such issues exemplify this. Another good example is the section *Transformative spaces* in *Chapter Four: Healing Journeys*, where I reflect on the experience of a particular ritual to speculate about how it might inform my educational practice.

Third, there are reflections in which I seek to extend my awareness of the frames from within which I am writing. For example, in *Postcards from the Edge* and in

[8] Dewey, J. (1958). Art as Experience. New York, Capricorn Books.

Interlude II: The space between, which precedes it, I engage with a social constructivist critique of "confessional" writing to clarify the basis on which I offer such a personal narrative.

Change and Transformation: I make a distinction between these terms to emphasise the difficulty of breaking old patterns of living and establishing new ones. I think of change as differences in outward form (doing different things) and transformation as an inward shift in our being (doing things differently) and regard both as essential attributes of *living inquiry*.

It is almost a cliché to say that beliefs and behaviours shaped by early childhood experiences can persist unawarely into adulthood, particularly in the context of intimate loving relationships. In *The Dragon Rider's Son* I trace the origin of some of the beliefs and behaviours that have caused me to struggle to find happiness and fulfilment in loving relationships. In *Out of the Frying Pan* and *Into the Fire*, I think you will see how I seek both to change and to transform my loving relationships through separation and divorce, whilst trying to stay close to my children. It is a messy process and far from a "victory narrative" but I make some claim to have forged a qualitatively different, more honest and satisfying, way of life.

Courage: There are many forms of courage and fortunately, although living a life of inquiry carries some inherent risks, it rarely calls for heroism. For the most part I am thinking of moral rather than physical courage though that too may occasionally be called for. I exercise courage when I allow myself to "feel the fear and do it anyway" – whether that be stepping into conflict, letting go of the known and the familiar, consciously trying something new or deciding to stay with a difficult situation instead of running away. In *Postcards from the Edge*, there are times when I fail to meet this standard, taking months to "come clean" about my relationship with Alison for example. But there are also moments when I do face my fears: when (in *Out of the Frying Pan*) I finally tell Sara about my extra-marital relationship, when (in *Father's Day*) I plunge into the river to embrace my father's "ghost", when (in *Into the Fire*) I persist in trying to rebuild relationships with my children despite their rebukes and my own sense of guilt.

There is a kind of courage too in putting so much of myself into the public domain in this text. Although I do not invite either approval or condemnation for the choices I have made in loving relationships, I am aware that in submitting this thesis for academic scrutiny I am also making myself vulnerable to judgements of a more personal nature. Perhaps that is an inevitable corollary of offering my *living inquiry* as a contribution to scholarship.

Interlude III

Writing an Abstract

Sunday 25th November 2000

I sent *Postcards from the Edge* to Jack Whitehead a couple of weeks ago asking for his "critical appreciation" but, this time, without any specific questions for him to address. A few days later he e-mailed the following reply:

> Just downloaded and read *Postcards from the Edge*: very powerful piece of writing. It feels to me that you have done what you wanted in "deftly integrating" living enquiry and telling. Could you try to write an Abstract of your Thesis for me – some 400 words should do it – which will help me to see how you have met the following standards of judgement:
>
> 'examiners should take into account the extent and merit of the work as well as its manner of presentation... the candidate shall have presented a thesis on the candidate's advanced study and research which satisfies the examiners as giving evidence of originality of mind and critical judgement in a particular subject; the thesis in all or in part should contain material worthy of publication.'

His request comes both as an encouragement to go deeper and as a challenge to my understanding. Can I articulate the nature of my thesis clearly and concisely? Can I show how it meets the examiner's critieria for judging a prospective PhD? "Well," I say to myself. "400 words cannot be that difficult." Until I sit down to think about it and realise some of the difficulties and paradoxes involved in such a task.

First, the text of the thesis is nowhere near complete. Since I am committed to the writing as a form of inquiry in its own right, how can I possibly provide a comprehensive explanation of its emerging thesis? Surely this will change over time as I follow the different strands of my inquiries and explore the connections, contradictions and tensions between them.

Second, the nature of the knowledge claims I am making – largely embodied in stories of my practice as a man, in loving relationships, in search of healing and as an

educator – mitigates against the very notion of abstraction. It is the particularity and concreteness of this "living knowledge" that lend it power. Its meanings are best communicated through harmonic resonance with the reader's own struggles and dilemmas. Such meanings are quickly diluted by generalisation into abstract propositional forms.

Third, I see myself as consciously challenging the boundaries of conventionally acceptable academic forms of representation. I decide that it is insulting to my creative self to be required to produce an abstract. Let my thesis speak for itself – why should I have to explain it in this way! Was Michaelangelo obliged to *explain* his statue of David? Oops! I seem to be getting a bit carried away here. After all, having seen examples of his sculpture on a recent trip to Florence, the fact that Michaelangelo knew what he was doing is pretty self-evident. Whether I can legitimately make a similar claim is actually rather more open to dispute.

Despite these arguments, qualifications and resistances, it would seem that writing an abstract might be an excellent way of deepening and testing my own understanding as well as inviting you, the reader, to approach the text with an openness to what I am seeking to explore and the ways in which I am going about it. What then can I say, at this point, about the nature of my thesis and how it might satisfy the twin criteria of originality of mind and critical judgement?

Abstract – First Draft

In writing this thesis, I address the "new scholarships" identified by Ernest Boyer (1990) and Donald Schon (1995). In particular, I seek to make a contribution to an emerging "scholarship of inquiry" in which – in the spirit of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1934) - the focus is on living the questions rather than seeking answers. I do so through the self-study of four strands of my practice: as a man, in loving relationships, in search of healing and as an educator.

The thesis is both an account of my learning in these areas and an action research inquiry in its own right as, over the course of two years, I sustain a cyclical process of writing and reflection, searching for connections, contradictions and tensions between the various strands.

In its manner of presentation, the thesis responds to the "crisis of representation" identified by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) by using what Eisner (1997) calls "alternative forms of data representation". The stories of living inquiry are self-reflective narratives of lived experience including "artistically rendered forms" such as poetry, creative writing, paintings, sculpture and audio recordings, where these help to convey something of the emotional, aesthetic and spiritual qualities inherent in the inquiries.

Throughout the thesis I develop the idea of *living inquiry* – a holistic approach in which all aspects of life are potentially available as sources of learning. *Living inquiry* is a form of action research embracing first, second and third person inquiry. It consciously avoids adopting any single method, preferring Feyerabend's (1975) argument that there are no general solutions and that the best chance of advancing knowledge comes from the intuitive use of a pluralistic methodology

As I consider my own inquiry practices, I discover that my version of Living Inquiry is characterised by several features:

- The juxtaposition and synthesis of *mythos* (with its language of personified images and narratives) and *logos* (with its analytical and propositional forms) as described by Labouvie-Vief (Labouvie-Vief 1994). This is central to my inquiry process and, incidentally, mirrors the requirement to demonstrate originality of mind and critical judgement.

- A concern with the inner life of the psyche and the outer life of working for good in the world as equally important. As with the ancient Chinese Yin/Yang symbol, these aspects both interpenetrate and contain each other. The thesis arcs deep into personal territory in the early chapters in order to emerge later into the more public domain of educational practice.

- A willingness to enter the void of unknowing and uncertainty without which significant personal learning and change cannot occur. I draw on Gestalt theory to describe this process and offer the Greek myth of Persephone and Demeter as an essentially feminine metaphor for this non-linear, kairatic approach. From this I develop the notion of "transformational space" for healing and learning, relating this to the Habermasian concept of "communicative space" and to Stein's idea of "liminal space" (Stein 1983).

- It embraces many different ways of knowing – physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, practical – including some unconventional routes to knowledge (e.g. ritual, divination, dance, artistic expression). Whilst not limited to Heron's (Heron 1992) fourfold epistemological hierarchy, my inquiries provide evidence of an openness to profound and novel experiences, creative and imaginative forms of representation, appropriate and well-grounded theory and a genuine commitment to improve my personal and professional practice.

- A preparedness to inquire into important and sometimes painful aspects of personal and professional practice. In this thesis I spotlight the exploration of my masculine identity, the breakdown of my marriage and my conduct in loving relationships, a long search for self-healing, and the nature of my educative influence upon others as a facilitator, consultant and senior police officer.

Whilst temperamentally wishing to avoid identification with any particular methodological or philosophical school, these features do broadly position my approach as *post-modern* in abandoning the grand-narratives of progressive social science (Lyotard 1984) *post-positivist* in its embrace of personal knowledge (Polanyi 1958) and multiple epistemologies (Heron 1992; Reason 1994) and *post-heroic* (Chinen 1993) in its acknowledgement that lives get interesting and inquiries come alive when we enter unknown territory not knowing in advance what we are seeking – when, in the words of the Russian folktale we *"go I know not whither [to] bring back I know not what".*

Well, there it is. It proved very difficult to write such a succinct account – previous drafts kept running away with me and I found myself either rewriting earlier chapters or anticipating future ones in an effort to explain and contextualise what I wanted to say in the abstract. Even now, I am not sure whether I have been sufficiently explicit in my claims to originality of mind and critical judgement. I wonder whether I should have stated bluntly that evidence of my originality of mind is to be found in the quality of my writing and the "creative intuition" I bring to my inquiry practice. Equally, that my critical judgement is apparent in my "conscious structuring" [1] of the material, in the quality and depth of my reflection and engagement with the ideas of others.

[1] I am very attracted to these ideas of "creative intuition" and "conscious structuring" which Seamus Heaney, in his introduction to *Beowulf,* attributes to JRR Tolkein - Heaney, S. (1999). Beowulf. London, Faber and Faber.

Finally I have to acknowledge that the abstract, like the thesis itself, is still a work in progress and that I will no doubt return to it as I complete each major stage of the writing to ask if it still reflects the key issues. In light of this, I want to express my gratitude to Peter Mellett (Mellet 2000) for introducing me to Heidegger's question - *Was ist das - die Philosophie?* - which he uses to help frame his review of Educational Action Research. Perhaps I could frame my thesis in similar terms. Then, following Peter's argument:

> With my review/research question posed in this form, I [too] am obliged as the questioner to remain an integral part of the questioning. I must tread a path with others *inside* the subject of the enquiry and give an account of how it is for us as we undertake that journey. It is not sufficient to stand *outside* the subject, to analyse it, and then to look for the construction of a definition. (Mellet 2000)

I think I may have stumbled upon the question that the text is seeking to answer: What is it to ask, what this thing –"Living Inquiry" – is? and I feel enormously excited about writing the remainder of the thesis with this new insight firmly in mind.

I took this version of the abstract to a CARPP workshop on 1st December 2000. It quickly became clear in conversation with colleagues that it needed more work in order to convey the essence of my thesis. Further drafts followed over the next fifteen months or so, culminating in a radically different form of words. Ironically, at the *viva voce* on 22nd March 2002, my examiners Donna Ladkin and Helen Simons preferred the original formulation and asked me to reinstate it (with some additions and amendments) at the head of the thesis.

I have done so gladly and without regret, despite the effort of producing so many intervening drafts for each one cast the developing thesis in a slightly different light, challenging my own understanding and shifting the emphasis as I wrote subsequent chapters: for example, in *Healing Journeys* to consider how I am using what I am learning from my own healing journey to help others and, in *Reshaping my Professional Identity* to think much more widely about the effect of my educative influence on others.

Chapter Four

Healing Journeys

Let me begin by making it clear that I am not using the word "healing" in a pathological sense to signify curing sickness or disease. Rather, I am talking about renewal, about metaphorically finding gold in the ashes of our lives. I believe that we are all wounded from time to time by life's vicissitudes and that we shape our lives by our responses to those wounds. As the poet Robert Bly [1] says:

> We did not come to remain whole
> We came to lose our leaves like the trees
> The trees that are broken
> And start again, drawing up from the great roots

A similar point, in the context of human inquiry, is made by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury in their introduction to the *Handbook of Action Research* (Reason and Bradbury 2000)

> Given the condition of our times, the primary purpose of human inquiry is not so much to search for truth but to heal, and above all to heal the alienation, the split that characterises modern experience. (p10)

My conscious search for healing began as a crisis of identity in my mid-thirties when (as I put it in *Police Stories*) "For the first time in my life I began to seriously question who I was and what I was about." It became an enduring search for meaning and purpose, for emotional expression and satisfying relationships, for intellectual development and understanding and, latterly, for physical health and well-being. Some of these quests are documented in *The Men's Room* and *Postcards from the Edge*, but I believe that my professional practice as a senior police officer and educator has also been significantly influenced by other, as yet untold, healing journeys.

[1] Lines attributed to Robert Bly - found on a noticeboard at Cortijo Romero, Southern Spain

These journeys are a vital part of my "living inquiries." Many have brought me joy and some began in suffering. A defining moment for me was sitting in a classroom at Police Headquarters in Welwyn Garden City in 1987 as one of twelve participants on a two-week facilitation course. We had been talking about emotional sensitivity and, as usual, I had little trouble finding glib words to show how well I understood the importance of paying attention to people's feelings. Then one of the trainers said: "Let's check right now how each of you is feeling." I sat quietly as others responded and when my turn came reached inside to check how I felt and found... nothing. I had no idea what I was feeling. I had no idea how to find out what I was feeling and I realised in that instant that (though I always knew what I was thinking) I had never known what I felt.

Writing this, fourteen years later, I can still pick up the echoes of my vertiginous descent into panic – at the time I mumbled some borrowed words: "I guess I feel about the same as John does – a bit tired and frustrated" and relapsed into silence. When we broke for tea, I walked round the grounds, increasingly desperate at the realisation that I was so out of touch with my emotions – no wonder my relationships were so muddled and confusing. After forty minutes or so, John came to find me and brought me back into the group. To my astonishment they seemed genuinely concerned about me and welcomed me warmly without demanding an explanation for my absence. The course continued but the incident stayed with me.

In the weeks that followed I came across a small book by psychotherapist Alan Wheelis called *How People Change* (Wheelis 1973) which seemed to speak directly to me: "We are what we do... and may do what we choose." Change, he argues, begins in suffering – discomfort with the way things are. If suffering leads to insight – a glimpse of understanding – we can use our will to take action and, through doing things differently, we can change our lives. It is, I see now, an overly-simplistic logic. Yet, it inspired me; I did not have to passively accept my lot; I had a choice. I could either ignore my concerns and carry on as usual or I could do something about it. I decided that, whatever the cost, I did not want to be an "emotional cripple" for the rest of my life and found first a counsellor and then a therapist to help me learn how to heal my "self".

This is a significant narrative, which is both a personal story about a key moment of realisation that it is possible to change and a story that, as I tell it, is woven into the life I am "composing" (Bateson 1990). In this chapter however, I want to do more than tell personal stories. I want to show how I am offering what I am learning through my own self-healing to others by co-creating what I call "transformative spaces" for learning and healing. To do so, I move freely between the inner life of the psyche and the outer life of working for good in the world, agreeing with Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (Reason and Bradbury 2000) when they quote Matthew Fox's translation of Meister Eckhart:

> The outward work
> will never be puny
> if the inner work
> is great
>
> And the outward work
> can never be great or even good
> if the inward one is puny and of little worth

I want to dig deeper into the "self" and what that implies for "self-healing." As throughout this thesis, I intend to ground this exploration in my lived experience, setting my reflections in the context of the wide range of healing activities and inquiries undertaken over the years. I then intend to look much more closely at two strands of inquiry which have particular life and energy for me now – finding meaning and purpose through creative storytelling and the co-creation of transformative spaces. Through this, I want to look at how I am applying what I am learning from my own self-healing to help others through my personal and professional practice.

Self and healing

Pinned to Jack Whitehead's office door is a laminated notice bearing the ironic injunction: "Please help your selves." "Well, I'm trying to," I think ruefully. "But I might do better if only I knew who or what my self is." In *The Space Between* I declared that:

> My sense of self is multi-faceted. Through living inquiries I seek to reveal some of these facets and find connections between them. I strive to embrace the apparent paradox of the one and the many and to live as if "I" matter. I think of my inquiries less in terms of "growth" or "development" and more in terms of "healing" – making whole. My understanding is always shifting and the more I discover, the less I know.

In this section I want to return to this question with the intention of continuing my self-exploration, hoping to enrich my understanding of the self's possibilities and potentials rather than to define it. As a point of departure, let us begin with some ontological reflections written in March 1998. [2]

For many years now, probably since my early thirties, I have found it impossible to accept the mechanistic-dualistic worldview of Newton and Descartes. As an explanatory framework for my being, it leaves me disconnected from nature and from my own body. Its linear logic seems to reject the richness and complexity of human experience and leave no room for the mysteries of spirit or the soul.

It was probably Gleick's book *Chaos* (Gleick 1987) that first provided me with an alternative viewpoint and I have continued to deepen my reading around the so-called new science of complexity. Writers such as Briggs and Peat (Briggs and Peat 1990), Stacey (Stacey 1992) and Capra (Capra 1983; Capra 1996) have been particularly influential. In one sense, I think of the world as emergent - a flux of constantly shifting patterns, an autopoetic response to the interplay of order and chaos. Creativity, learning, growth, new knowledge occur in this transitional space "at the edge of chaos". I cannot control what emerges, but I do have some agency - I both contribute to and am shaped by intrinsically unknowable systemic forces.

In recent years, as I have engaged in a wide variety of "developmental" activities, coinciding with the arrival of mid-life, I have come to believe in the sacredness of creation. I cannot define this in terms of a coherent belief system, simply that I have heard the voice of my soul and felt its connection with the soul of the world. For me, soul is embodied and is nourished by the use of my senses, as I encounter what David Abram (Abram 1997) calls "the more than human world". Hillman (Hillman 1983; Hillman 1996), too, has greatly influenced me here.

[2] As part of my CARPP Diploma/MPhil transfer paper

Spirit seems to me to be disembodied, a universal presence combining wisdom and love. In *Out of the Frying Pan* I recount several occasions when in different ways, through ritual and divination, I have sought and received guidance from the sprit world. I am grateful to Peter Reason, whose clear thinking and willingness to embrace these issues in an academic context, both in seminars and published sources (Reason 1993; Reason and Heron 1996; Reason 1997; Reason and Goodwin 1997) I find inspiring. He has also introduced me to the work of scholars such as Henryk Skolimowski (Skolimowski 1994), Richard Tarnas (Tarnas 1991) and David Abram (Abram 1997) who, in different ways, are creating the vocabulary to describe an emerging, participative paradigm in which I find room both for my strong sense of "I" and my deep, reciprocal connection with "other".

What I notice now is the almost exclusive emphasis in these reflections on two aspects of being – the mental and the spiritual. The physical is barely implied and the emotional omitted entirely. Yet I am also a feeling body, living in relationship with other feeling bodies and with the natural world. My sense of self certainly encompasses these aspects as equally important and deserving of attention. Indeed, whilst ever-wary of the dangers of over simplification, I am drawn to the old Indian proverb, which according to the writer Rumer Goden says that:

> Everyone lives in a house with four rooms; a physical, an emotional, a mental and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time but, unless we go into every room, every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not complete persons.

At the practical level of self-care, such a notion can certainly help us to pay attention to a wide range of needs and encourage us to live a balanced life-style. I have used it myself (for example, when playing the Transformation Game™) as a framework for inquiry and action. We might say that the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of our being represent a palette of four (rather than three) primary colours. Like an artist, we can extend our palette by using and mixing different hues, tones and intensities of colour. Of course, the palette is not the painting – just as my sense of self is more than the sum of its various aspects. The artistic metaphor implies that self-creation requires imagination and inspiration as well as good technique. Both, in my view, are equally important. One cannot paint a vibrant picture with an insipid palette and it is hard to imagine that one can develop a strong and healthy sense of self without paying attention to each of these four aspects of being.

Before going on to consider a more holistic view of self, I want to pause to review some of the ways I have sought to extend my "living palette". Separating them into discrete areas is quite artificial but may serve as a rough guide to my inquiries.

Physical	Emotional

• Jogging, exercise, diet
• Dancing - Five Rhythms
• Massage, acupuncture
• Qi gong, Tai Chi
• Learning to sail
• Making a new home
• Starting a business
• Buying a sports car
	• Relationship counselling
	• Individual Gestalt therapy
	• Friendship with Chris
	• Loving relationships
	  ▪ Separation and divorce
	  ▪ Children and parents
	  ▪ New partner
	• Mentoring and coaching

Mental	**Spiritual**
• Completing an MBA • Training as a consultant • Reading widely • Theatre and cinema • Writing articles • Speaking at conferences • Studying for a PhD • Working as a strategist	• Zazen (sitting) meditation • Ritual menswork • Astrology, divination • Poetry and painting • Annual retreats • Walking and gardening • Transformation Game™ • Storytelling

A living palette of inquiries into four aspects of being

I notice that virtually everything in each list involves some activity – so perhaps the palette says more about my doing than my being. None of them are "trivial pursuits" (with the possible exception of buying a sports car); most of them have either extended over several years or been a regular practice during the past ten to fifteen

years. Far from being constrained within separate categories, most have a high degree of inter-penetration between two or more aspects of being. Thus, walking in the woods around my home each weekend is clearly a physical activity. It is also a time for creative thinking and of opening myself to encounter the "more than human world" manifested in the plants and animals around me. Dancing the Five Rhythms[3] is also a deeply emotional experience, allowing me to relate to others and express my feelings through sound and movement. Studying for, and writing this PhD, has stimulated profound inquiries into my conduct in loving relationships and into the nature of my own spirituality.

The five years I spent in individual Gestalt psychotherapy (1989-94) represent an enormous investment of time, energy (and money) in self-healing. At forty, like Dante:

> Mid-way this way of life we're bound upon
> I woke to find myself in a dark wood
> Where the right road was lost and gone[4]

Like Dante also, I was lucky enough to find a guide, Judith my therapist, who led me through my own psychological inferno to face the ghosts of my childhood and better understand my adult self. She taught me how to get in touch with my emotions, helped me to express my fear, grief, shame and anger and eventually enabled me to find a measure of self-acceptance and willingness to take responsibility for my own life. Although much of this process is documented in my journal, I shall not dwell on it here, not because it is secret or taboo, but because it no longer holds energy for me. That inquiry has run its full course; I learned a great deal and it is done. I need to acknowledge how valuable it was but writing about it at length now would merely be re-hashing the past.

Over time, the focus has shifted within and between the four areas. If I tried to do all these things at once I would be spread too thin. My ideal is to achieve balance, focus

[3] A form of free-expression dance created by Gabrielle Roth which was part of my practice for six or seven years until an unconnected back injury caused me to abandon it for the time being. See Roth, G. (1990). Maps to Ecstasy: Teachings of an Urban Shaman. London, Mandala.
[4] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy,* Trans. Dorothy Sayers.

and a sense of space in my life though sometimes things go awry. Writing this thesis is demanding a huge commitment of mental energy. Too often, I end up living "in my head" to the detriment of my physical, emotional and spiritual well being. When I notice, as today, I can make a conscious effort to go to the gym, to phone a friend, to meditate for ten minutes and regain some balance.

In each area, there are some solitary, inner-focused activities and some that focus outwardly on connections and relationships with others and this intuitively feels right. As I said earlier, I need to "find room both for my strong sense of "I" and my deep, reciprocal sense of "other". I could write much more about all of these individual activities and inquiries but the palette is not the painting and despite the importance (perhaps even the necessity) of this work, I know there is something more. Something, perhaps, to do with identity and purpose that is closer to the "me" that I recognise as a unique constellation of consciousness and energy in the world.

Yet the more I try to answer the question "Who am I?" the more confused I become and increasingly I find myself in sympathy with Kenneth Gergen's argument that the social saturation of contemporary life is leading to the erosion of the identifiable self:

> For everything we "know to be true" about ourselves, other voices within respond with doubt and even derision. This fragmentation of self-conceptions corresponds to a multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships. These relationships pull us in myriad directions, inviting us to play such a variety of roles that the very concept of an "authentic self" with knowable characteristics recedes from view. (Gergen 1991)

The danger is of feeling so overwhelmed that we sink into a morass of moral relativism in which we lose all sense of agency and responsibility, our identities "written upon us" by random forces beyond our control. The alternative is for each of us to assume responsibility for who we are and for how we embody and enact our multiplicitous "saturated selves." I choose to behave as if my choices matter, believing that I have some agency in the world and knowing that I am strongly

influenced by the social formations of which I am a part[5]. I choose, also, not to limit my sense of self by holding rigidly to a single philosophical viewpoint. Thus, although the "authentic self" may not withstand ironic scrutiny, I still find myself strongly influenced by concepts of integrity and authenticity as I engage in the lifelong "reflexive project" of the self (Giddens 1991). I am still striving for meaning and coherence in an incoherent world, not yet ready to sound the death knell for humanistic aspirations of self-actualisation and heartened by Gergen's conclusion that, despite the postmodern imperatives of the "saturated self":

> ... neither the romantic nor the modern traditions need be lost from the culture. Modernist attributes of the person such as rationality, sincerity, and perfectibility need not be abandoned, nor must modernist forms of relationship – investing in children, building hierarchies, conducting science, building for the future - be ultimately condemned...In the same way the post-modernist perspective invites a resuscitation of romanticism. A person need not be embarrassed to speak of his or her soul, passion, or communion with nature. (Gergen 1991) p247

Indeed, it has often been insights from ancient wisdom traditions that have helped me most as I floundered through a protracted mid-life crisis of identity searching for a new sense of meaning and purpose. James Hillman's marvellous book *The Soul's Code*, in particular has brought me back to my earliest calling, that of a writer. Drawing on Plato's Myth of Er in *The Republic*, Hillman entertains the idea that we are each born with our own *telos* (that which we are destined to become). Our soul-companion, our *daimon* remembers and is the carrier of this destiny. Therefore:

> ... we must attend very carefully to childhood to catch early glimpses of the daimon in action, to grasp its intentions and not block its way (Hillman 1996)

When I was eight years old, at boarding school, I used to hide from my loneliness and fear in books. My favourite character was *Biggles* – a dashing pilot (like my dad who had been killed in a plane crash when I was four). I loved these stories and, one day, I sat down with a fresh pencil and notebook to write one of my own. I decided it

[5] This is akin (though not identical) to Berger and Luckman's statement that: "Identity... like all subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society." Berger, P. and T. Luckman (1984). The Social Construction of Reality. London, Pelican.

would be about a German pilot who had been shot down and captured. I wrote a page and a half of my intended novel and stopped. It was nothing like the books I had read. It did not occur to me that the author of *Biggles* was an adult, just that mine was not good enough. I wept in frustration and threw the notebook away. It would be another forty years before I remembered that the first thing I ever wanted to be was a writer. Of course, I wrote in the meantime – for school, for university, for work, even love letters and the odd poem. It was not that I did not write but that I did not identify myself, as I once had and now do, as a writer. In the past few years, writing has again become central to my way of being – as it was during that brief and intense childhood experience – and now I have the skill and confidence to express myself as I wish. I write to communicate and understand. I write to discover and create meaning by languaging the world afresh each time my pen touches the page... and that is how I write, long-hand, watching the ink flow and the words stream out of me, down my arm, through my fingers and, magically, out of the pen onto the paper. I can type, after a fashion, and my words often end up being transcribed via a word processor but, for me, writing is an analogic not a digital process.

This is a story I have often told and I tell it here for two reasons. First, because I think it says something significant about who I am and, second, because it illustrates beautifully how I come to form and reform my sense of self through the stories I tell about myself. As Arthur Frank says in *The Wounded Storyteller:*

> The self-story is not told for the sake of description, though description may be its ostensible content. The self is being *formed* in what is told. (Frank 1995)

Perhaps then, the self is a telling. If so, it comes into being in communion with others for there can be no telling without listening. This, at least, best expresses my current understanding of self. From that I take self-healing to be re-storying our lives in ways that provide meaning and purpose through changing times and circumstances. To understand this process more fully (both for the sake of my own healing and to help

others) I have been learning about and practising storytelling for several years and, as a parallel inquiry, exploring the conditions that enable us to create safe spaces for such powerful and transformative work.

Once upon a time

"We are forever telling stories about ourselves[6]", but when our existing sense of self collapses through serious illness or some other traumatic event, our habitual stories lose their meaning. Arthur Frank refers to such times as "narrative wreckage" and he writes movingly about them as a "call for stories... as a way of redrawing maps and finding new destinations." (Frank 1995) The self-stories that emerge from narrative wreckage offer the most vivid and dramatic examples of self-healing through storytelling.

When our marriage ended and Sara and I went our separate ways in 1997, I experienced this kind of narrative wreckage. The stories that I told about myself as a dutiful husband and loving father sounded hollow and false in the face of my "desertion." Others began to inscribe their stories upon me – another "client story" from the lawyers; a "mid-life cliché story" from dismissive acquaintances; a "great escape story" from those who saw themselves trapped in loveless relationships. It was difficult to resist these projections – to avoid being taken over by other people's tellings – but eventually, after a year or so, I knew that I needed to find a way to tell my own story: a story that would help me make sense of what had happened, one that would help me find new meaning and purpose in my life.

Pursuing my fascination with stories, I went on a weeklong, residential storytelling course at Hawkwood in the summer of 1998. On the second morning I woke up very early realising that I wanted to use our end-of-course performance to tell the story of meeting my lover Alison at that very same place nearly two years before. Tentatively at first, then with growing confidence, *The man who lived as a king* emerged through our daily improvisation sessions until, on the final night, it was my turn to take

[6] Comment attributed to psychotherapist Roy Schafer in Frank, A. W. (1995). The Wounded Storyteller. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. P53

centre-stage and tell my story to the twenty or so course members and tutors gathered round the storyteller's chair.

The man who lived as a king

Some people say that this story comes from long ago and far away - while others say they can remember exactly where and when it happened.

There was once a man who lived as a king. The land in which he was born was rich and fertile. But when he was five years old his father was killed - and the land died with him. Nothing grew. It became bleak and barren.

When he became a young man he left that place and went to a great university where he studied the history of the ancient kingdoms. While he was there, as sometimes happens to young men, he met a princess. Her father had also died so there was no one to set him ordeals or tests for her hand. However, they were young and they liked each other and they decided to marry.

After the wedding, he moved into her realm. There he found a crown to wear, but it did not fit him very well. Indeed, neither of their crowns fitted very well. They did not know how to rule at all - although they did their best. Being young and healthy it was not too long before they had children. In fact they had four wonderful children, two girls and two boys.

You might think that would be enough for anyone's happiness. But they were not happy. For, although they loved their children dearly, they did not love each other. The years passed. The princess became a queen and turned her love and attention towards the children. The man, not knowing what to do, fell into a deep despair.

Then, one night, he had a dream. He saw the land of his birth and longed to return there although he had long since forgotten how to get there. The dream stayed with him and he decided to search for the way. He began to travel out from the queen's court for one or two days, sometimes a week, at a time - visiting new places, meeting new people, even sampling new customs. He regained some of the love of learning that he had as a young man. One thing in particular brought him some respite from his sadness - he learned .... to dance! There was no dancing in the queen's court - but he danced in secret whenever he could. And he went on searching.

One day, as the man approached his fiftieth year, he found himself in a place that he had never been to before .... A large stone house, perched high on a hill, overlooking a broad valley. There was a great company of people there - scholars, musicians, travellers, searchers all and he had a wonderful time. He enjoyed himself so much that he invited them all to join him for a dance that evening.

At dusk they gathered in the ballroom and as the music played they began to dance, some in couples, some alone. Suddenly from the shadows, into the centre of the room, came the most beautiful girl the man had ever seen. She had a mane of chestnut hair that fell to her waist and swayed as she moved. Her dark eyes flashed with fire and her face shone with good humour. She was wild and free. She called no man her master and she came and went as she pleased. Their eyes met and she approached him boldly. They danced together. They danced and danced and danced ... out of the evening and into the night ... and beyond.

It was late the next day when the man awoke. He was lying on a grassy bank, under a sycamore tree, with the sun streaming through its branches onto his face. He was so mesmerised by this sight that he thought that it had all been a dream and he went to turn over. Something held him back ... There, looking back at him, lying in the crook of his arm, was that same girl.

Now, she was a spinner of tales and a weaver of spells and she wove a purple bubble around them both to keep out the world. They lay in that place all day, talking, laughing and holding each other close. To him she seemed like a butterfly, free on the wind whilst he was earthbound, stuck in the cocoon. But she taught him that anything is possible if you want it enough. Eventually the bubble burst, as all bubbles do and the man returned to the queen's court thinking that he should never see the girl again.

As the weeks passed he thought about her more and more and he realised that if he was ever to find his way back to the land of his birth he must first take off his borrowed crown and set it aside. He decided to tell the queen that he was leaving. She was angry and wept bitter tears. He told the children too and they begged him to stay. But he knew that he must go.

And go he did. He walked out of the queen's court with just a few books, a little music and the clothes on his back and he went on walking ... and walking ... and walking until he found himself beside a lake. There he built himself a small house and there he found work, writing and teaching and there he planted many seeds. As the seasons came and went, the seeds sent forth shoots. The shoots swelled into buds. The buds blossomed.

He began, at last, to live his own life. His days were joyful and full of small adventures. His nights were peaceful and solitary ... except when the wild girl came to visit and then the days were full of playful laughter and the nights of sweet love-making.

And I have it on good authority that they live so to this very day!

I wrote the text of the story down the next day. I knew it so well that I captured it verbatim but like any captured creature it has lost some of its living energy along with its freedom. I can never hope to convey fully what happened during the telling. As the story unfolded, I experienced a profound sense of communion with the audience. Our tears and laughter commingled and I saw myself, my new self, mirrored in their eyes. Telling this story to myself and to that particular audience was just the beginning. There were others I needed to tell, starting with Alison – the "wild girl" herself. I did so on holiday in a walking lodge in the Pyrenees on the second anniversary of our meeting, surrounded by our fellow guests. The story has become part of our story, reflecting and continuing to shape our relationship.

Subsequently, I told the story to close friends and then more widely to several men's groups and now (three years on) to the world at large through this thesis. Each telling is a reaffirmation of the story and of my sense of self. This seems to me to be identical with the concept of *narrative identity,* a self "born in stories", which Frank attributes to Paul Ricoeur (Frank 1995). *The man who lived as a king* is a good example of how creative intuition and conscious structuring come together in the art and craft of storytelling. Using the form of a fairy story enabled me to connect with archetypal energies to tell my self anew, no longer just another middle-aged man who left his wife and children but a character in a universal story, a survivor of narrative wreckage.

Reading these words again, I realise that I have glossed over the crucial role I believe such archetypal stories play in our lives. Every culture, it seems, has an inexhaustible fund of myth and legend [7] but what is their purpose? Freudian psychoanalysis and Jungian analytic psychology both draw heavily on ancient myths to

[7] See, for example Campbell, J. (1968). The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Princeton, Bolingen.

describe and explain the roots of human behaviour, as though these universal stories are imprinted on our minds at birth. Rollo May, a contemporary psychotherapist and writer speaks of an innate human need for myths which he defines as "narrative patterns that give significance to our existence" (May 1991 p15)

Mythology and psychology, it seems, are closely entwined. When we tell the stories of our lives in mythic terms, we touch the eternal: our personal ontology assumes cosmological significance. Paradoxically, we can see that what we have in common with the rest of the human race is our uniqueness as human beings: our individual experience matters more because we share in the human condition.

Several stories affect me in this way. One is *The Man Who Lived as King*, particularly in terms of striving for joy and fulfilment in loving relationships. Another, which speaks directly to my sense of myself as a "living inquirer", is *Jumping Mouse*, a Native American teaching story from the tradition of the Plains Indian People [8]. It tells of a mouse who undertakes a perilous journey of discovery and sacrifice to follow his [sic] vision of the Sacred Mountains. It is a story of courage, of loss, of hope, of comradeship and, ultimately, of transformation.

I find aspects of my life present in this story just as the story itself is present in my life. A friend introduced me to the story about ten years ago and I have since told it on many occasions – to my children, friends, colleagues, MSc students, organisational consultants, fellow storytellers, even (as I relate in *Reshaping my Professional Identity*) to groups of police officers and managers. At every telling the story speaks also to me, to my commitment to lifelong *living inquiry*.

Talking about a story is no substitute for the story itself, so I include it here – at the heart of my thesis – as a celebration of the mystery at the heart of life. It is both a profound meta-myth for *living inquiry*, and a simple gift of a tale well told. The story comes from a long oral tradition and I have recorded a version for you to hear. Listening to rather than reading the story will, I believe, enable you to encounter

[8] This story has been shared with non-Native American cultures by Hyemeyohsts Storm in his classic book of the Plains Indian People, *Seven Arrows* Storm, H. (1972). Seven Arrows. New York, Ballantine Books.

Jumping Mouse more directly and, perhaps, allow us to meet as listener and teller on mythic ground. I invite you now to relax and listen to the story. I encourage you to suspend judgement for the moment, to open yourself to the story and, as Rumi says:

> [to] enjoy this being washed
> with a secret we sometimes know,
> and then not.

TAPE RECORDING – JUMPING MOUSE – 20 Minutes

I wonder how the story speaks to you, whether you find in it echoes of your own life, whether you can appreciate the significance it has for me as I live my life of inquiry, and whether you sense a connection between our stories – yours and mine – through the medium of this mythic tale. With these thoughts in mind, let me pick up the theme of storytelling as a healing practice.

As so often in my living inquiries, I followed my felt need and my curiosity – this time into a deeper and wider exploration of story through experiential workshops, storytelling "performances", reading and writing until it has become an integral part of my personal and professional practice. Over several years, the inquiry has moved between the experiential, presentational, propositional and practical modes. Its emphasis has also gradually changed from What can I learn about myself both from self-stories and from traditional tales? through How do stories and storytelling work their healing magic? to How can I bring the gift of story to others in ways that help them heal too?

The inquiry has been quite "messy", shifting back and forth between these different modes and levels, often encompassing several at once. I have, for example, become an accomplished storyteller, able to "hold" an audience and serve a story well. As I practised storytelling I discovered a tremendous difference between story-as-text and story-as-told. Story-as-told arises in the moment as a shared experience between teller and listener, creating a sense of community. It seems to take on a life of its own, gripping the teller and listener equally in its imaginative possibilities. Story-as-

text tends to create a less immediate experience: the relationship between author and reader more distant than that between teller and listener. Later in this chapter, in *Inquiring into my practice*, I explore some of these issues further – drawing on a workshop I ran in March 2000 for a CARPP/SOLAR postgraduate group on storytelling as an *Inquiry into meaning-making and community-building.*

I have used stories to help me make sense of organisational life and as a form of consultancy intervention, publishing a short article on the subject, *A Winter's Tale: Myth, Story and Organisations* (Mead 1997) in the journal *Self and Society*, going on to teach others how to use stories to catalyse organisational change in sessions with PriceWaterhouseCoopers (1998), Middlesex University (1999) and NHS Human Resource Directors (2000). I treat such storytelling as "gift work" through which I can "redirect" some corporate funds to charity.

My bookshelves are groaning with volumes of stories and books about stories too numerous to mention, but I do want to cite some of the writers who have been most influential in helping me get "underneath the skin" of stories: Jerome Bruner, whose classic paper *Two Modes of Thought* (Bruner 1988) originally published in 1968, gives a convincing psychological basis for the power of stories to "endow experience with meaning"; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, whose book *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) illustrates so vividly how our ability to make meaning both arises from, and is limited by, our metaphorical imagination; Mary Catherine Bateson (Bateson 1990) and Erving Polster (Polster 1987) who provide such rich examples of "composing" our lives through narrative; Robert Bly (Bly 1990; Bly 1993) and Allan Chinen (Chinen 1993) who show how the archetypal and mythic elements of traditional stories touch our common humanity and encourage us to "find gold in the ashes" of our lives; James Hillman (Hillman 1983; Hillman 1996) and Arthur Frank (Frank 1995) who explicitly identify the therapeutic and healing power of stories; Ben Okri (Okri 1997) and Salman Rushdie (Rushdie 1991) whose passionate and exuberant love of stories reminds us (should we forget) how exciting, joyful and liberating it is to tell our stories and what an essential part of our human nature it is do so. *"Homo Fabula:* we are storytelling beings." (Okri 1997)

By 1999 I wanted to offer an opportunity for others to experience the healing power of storytelling. In the first instance, I was drawn to do this work with men and wrote a "flyer" to advertise an event called *(His)Stories*, which I described as:

> Designed for men in the midst of life, it will draw on the power and beauty of traditional stories and storytelling to invite us to tell our own life stories as men and to hear them mirrored in the lives of others. A good story can inspire us to step onto the path of transformation and it can cheer and comfort us on our way. To tell our own story and to be heard with love and respect is the simplest and, perhaps, the most profound act of human communication.

In the last sentence I am recognising that we need to be in relationship with others to heal our wounded selves. Or, as Bruner concludes: "Selves... can only be revealed in a transaction between teller and told" (Bruner 1990).

In the end, ten men joined me at Bramshill on a glorious September day to experience this for themselves. I told the story *Go I know not whither, bring back I know not what.* We exchanged insights, drew pictures, ate lunch together on the lakeshore and, by late afternoon, began to share stories about ourselves. Self-stories, some of them told for the first time, stories about success, failure, love, loss, ageing, sexuality, friendship, children, parents, loneliness, alienation, re-connection and hope – the kind of stories men don't usually tell each other in everyday encounters. As we said goodbye and went our various ways I was left moved by the openness of the men and by the quality of attention we had given each other. It seemed to me that, together, we had created a very unusual space – a container for our stories woven from the stories themselves.

Transformative spaces

Holding this tantalising thought about a container made from that which it contains, I am puzzling about how such "transformative spaces" sometimes arise from our interactions and under what conditions they are most likely to emerge. *(His)Stories* had provided a simple structure, an engaging story, a pleasant physical environment, and the chance to speak and be heard without judgement. But I suspect this is too

simple a rubric and that I need to open up this riddle to further inquiry. What comes to mind is to take another example, perhaps one of working with other men to create ritual space which also seems to have this "transformative" quality, and to mine the experience for some of the qualities and practices that enabled self-healing to occur.

I wrote the following text in May 1999, a couple of weeks after the events it describes, so they were fresh in my memory. It brings together several strands of living inquiry: men and masculinity, loving relationships, healing and (in the way I have since offered forms of ritual for other men) my educative influence. It begins by plunging into experiential inquiry.

A ritual for separation

Some weeks ago I realised that, although legally divorced since September, I still felt bound (imprisoned? trapped?) by the marriage vows Sara and I had taken twenty-five years earlier. I wondered if the pain I was experiencing in my testicles had some psychic connection with a sense that I had given my balls away. Talking about this with my friend Peter as we walked together in Ashridge Forest we compared the enormous psychic bond ritualised in the wedding ceremony with the unheralded arrival of a court order "decree absolute" through the post, terminating the marriage. It became clear to me that I needed a ritual ending to counteract the enduring the force of the wedding ceremony.

So, on 12 April, Peter and I met two other members our men's group, Len and Mike at Hazel Hill, a seventy-acre wood near Salisbury. Together, we spent the morning clearing and cleaning the circular space within a wattle and thatch roundhouse. Taking our lead from the symbolism of the Native American Medicine Wheel we decorated the four directions. In the North, a circle of ashes with a rattle and talking stick for the warrior; in the South, an inner circle of drums, logs and candles for the "village" and for healing; in the East, the direction of new beginnings, we built a fire and a shrine to represent male energy; to the West, the direction of endings, a shrine to honour the feminine, the earth mother.

Having laboured to create a sacred environment, we drummed, danced and chanted to bring ourselves fully present and to invoke the spirits. With the help and support of the other men each of us made our own ritual, honouring both male and female, to suit our different needs. I will not write of other's experiences but I want to describe my own here because I think it has played a crucial part in what I believe to be a fundamental shift in the ground of my being.

I knew that I was ready when I began to shake with excitement and fear. It reminded me of the feeling you get as the carriage clatters to a halt at the top of a roller-coaster ride, just before plunging into the abyss. Peter accompanied me from "the village" to the place of the warrior. I stood outside the ash circle for a minute or two, gathering my will so that when I stepped across into the circle, I did so with full intention. I took up the rattle and shook it vigorously, its rough tones stirring my passion, then took up the talking stick. I could find no words, just guttural noises. Breathing hard, I expressed the sounds louder and louder until I was yelling at full volume into the woods. I stopped and for a few moments, heard my voice crashing through the trees. My blood was up.

I went over to the female shrine [perhaps I should more properly say the shrine representing our commitment to and relationship, as men, with the feminine principle] and stood for a while, solitary, dumb and lonely so I asked the other men, seated in "the village", to join me at the shrine. Without knowing what I was going say, I simply let the words emerge. "You don't own me, you never have. I gave you my balls and now I'm taking them back." So saying, I reached out and seized two round stones lying in the grasp of clay fingers. "I choose never to be afraid of you ["woman"] again. I choose never to put myself in your power again. I do not hate you or want to destroy you, just to be separate, to be male, to be free."

From there to the male shrine, fire burning brightly in the hearth; I put the stone "cojones" down beside a symbolic phallus, feeling somehow complete. "For too long I have been ashamed and afraid to take my place as a man. No more!" It was good to be warmed by the flames, flanked by my comrades.

Finally, I went to "the village", where we sat on logs in a tight circle and I told the story of my relationship with Sara; how we met, got engaged and married - despite internal doubts - how we had four children together, some of the joy and pain of those many years together, and of the parting and divorce. To symbolise our separation, I cut carefully through a photograph of us taken together at a party in happier times. As I did so, two of the men began to drum - softly at first then building to a crescendo - until, as I made the final cut, they struck a single clear note. It went straight into my body like a gunshot. I reeled from its impact and knew it was done. I was no longer enthralled.

We opened a bottle of champagne and drank in celebration of all our endings and beginnings. We hugged and whooped and hollered, laughing with intoxicated delight. Len lit a Havana cigar, which we passed round in lieu of a ceremonial pipe. Then, in more sombre mood once

more, we sat quietly together until another man was moved to begin his own ritual. That night I wrote in my journal... "Now I am divorced. Now I am my own man, owning my own balls, my own power and sexual energy. Now my separation has been witnessed and feels complete. It is good that we [men] can do these things for ourselves and for each other".

Goose-bumps prick my skin and the hairs on the back of my neck stand up as I read these words, the power of the experience deeply embodied and still very much alive. Then I settle into a more detached and reflective mode and wonder what can be drawn from this particular occasion that might help me better understand how to create transformative spaces with, and for, others. Going back over the text and recalling the events of the day, here are some of the features of the ritual that strike me as possible contributions to this wider endeavour.

- Intention – We went to Hazel Hill prepared to commit ourselves to the process, to take it and ourselves seriously enough not to hold back, and believing sufficiently in the possibility of beneficial outcomes to find the time to be there.

- Attention – I think we brought a quality of mindful awareness that enabled us to be fully present in that time and place, allowing the possibility that anything and everything that happened might be relevant and significant. This seemed to require a "willing suspension of disbelief" and an opening of oneself to the sacred.

- Invocation – Through the creation of the shrines and "energising" them with our drumming, dancing and chanting, we invited a connection with something beyond, something greater than our everyday human selves. We might call this Higher Self, God, Creator, Great Spirit, Universal Wisdom, the "more than human world", Anima Mundi or any one of a thousand names.

- Imagination – In our words, and in the symbols and images we made, we activated our creative intuition, allowing ourselves to be inspired and inspiring each other to put our hearts and souls into the work.

- Preparation – We worked together to clean and prepare the space – to honour it with our labour and make it a fit place for ritual. We also prepared ourselves

through reflection and meditation so that we would be ready to receive whatever blessings might come our way.

- Spontaneity – The counterpoint to careful preparation was our willingness to trust our own process enough to allow the rituals to unfold spontaneously, freeing our attention from anxiety and attachment to outcome sufficiently to stay in the "here and now".

- Enactment – We did not just talk about our issues, we enacted them in ritual, moving round the "stations" of the ritual space, interacting with the shrines (and with each other) through gesture and touch as well as spoken words, embodying our questions and responses, taking the experience deep inside.

- Environment – Hazel Hill provided a wonderful location for the ritual. We built our shrines in the heart of the wood, far away from public gaze, open to the elements and surrounded by natural beauty. Although we are not always so fortunate, the environment in which we do such work does play an important part in the quality of the experience.

- Structure – The four directions of the Native American Medicine Wheel provided a simple and robust form for the ritual space, within which we were free to elaborate and improvise. It held us well – neither so tightly as to constrain nor so loosely as to leave us floundering.

- Mutuality – We were there for each other just as much as for ourselves and this was reflected in an attitude of mutual respect and companionship. Each of us gave and took the time that was needed. I experienced being "seen" and accepted for who I am, without feeling the need either to apologise or show off.

- Vulnerability – As well as summoning our warrior energy, we allowed ourselves to be vulnerable, freely naming our hopes, fears and pain. Our vulnerability was an offering to each other, a gift to be shared through our stories, our singing and dancing, and through our need for physical contact – to hold and be held.

- Leadership – No-one held tightly on to leadership. It moved freely around the group as we made suggestions, co-operated and initiated. There seemed to be enough room for everyone to lead, even though Peter and I had called us together. Maybe, over a longer period of time, egos would have clashed (which would certainly have tested the quality of the "transformative space") but there was no sign of this during our day at Hazel Hill.

Teasing these twelve features out of the text moves us from experiential and presentational knowing into the propositional realm. The statements identify some of the conditions that, I believe, created the space within which it was possible for me to find a new (and separate) sense of self, through a powerfully symbolic transaction "between the teller and the told" (Bruner 1990). I call this kind of social setting which enables, encourages and supports such qualitative shifts in self-perception "transformative space" and this notion has become central to my practice as an educator.

Staying in the propositional mode, I am aware that my understanding of "transformational learning" and "transformative space" also has roots in several sources. My four and a half years training in a Gestalt approach to organisational consulting (1991-95) and five years as a client in Gestalt psychotherapy (1989-94) have been major influences. Within a Gestalt frame (Perls, Hefferline et al. 1984), "transformational learning" occurs in the "aha" moment as an old gestalt (or pattern of meaning) dissolves and a new gestalt emerges from the dissolution. This is a non-linear and discontinuous process - similar perhaps to the emergence of order on the edge of chaos - and ultimately a mystery. We can help to create the conditions that improve the likelihood of this kind of learning but it is always unpredictable, a moment of grace. In the Gestalt model, letting go of old patterns of understanding is a pre-requisite to the emergence of new patterns - unlearning as well as learning. As Petruska Clarkson says:

> It is from the void that the new emerges, it was in the deepest darkness that Moses found God and it is when we most truly let ourselves go into the emptiness that fullness can begin to arise. (Clarkson 1993)

Letting ourselves go into the emptiness can be frightening and we can support each other by creating a climate in which we are prepared to be, and be seen, as uncomfortable, inconsistent, out of control and "incompetent". As in *A ritual for separation*, many factors can contribute to such a climate, but the quality of relationships in the group is crucial. Many writers have offered helpful frameworks for understanding group dynamics, from the psycho-analytic "basic assumption group" of Wilfrid Bion (Bion 1959), to the human needs "inclusion/ autonomy/affection" model of Will Schutz (Schutz 1979), or the Reichian nurturing/energising/achieving/ relaxing" stages of group development proposed by Randall and Southgate (Randall and Southgate 1980). I do not discount the usefulness of these generic frameworks when working with groups but regard them as describing necessary rather than sufficient conditions for the creation of "transformative space".

Something more is needed and I catch glimpses of that "something" in the writing of Murray Stein when he describes the archetypal energy of Hermes, God of Magic. For me, this touches on the element of mystery that I believe to be intrinsic to transformational learning and transformative spaces:

> Hermes... god of journeyers, of boundaries and of boundary situations, who transfers messages and communications among the realms; the god of passages from one dimension of existence to another, from life to death and from death to life, who in alchemy becomes the master of transformations (Stein 1983).

So strongly do I identify with this Hermetic energy that I once proposed Hermes as guardian and patron deity of organisational consultants (Mead 1997) and named my own company Hermes Consulting in his honour.

As well as this element of mystery, "transformative spaces" are places where people feel recognised and accepted for "who they are". Francis Fukuyama (Fukuyama 1992) draws on the Greek notion of *thymos* which he describes as: "Man's [sic] sense of self-worth and the desire that it be recognised" as a powerful social driver. I think it offers a partial explanation for the particular power of people coming together as peers to support each other's learning. *Isothymia* – the desire "to be recognised as the equal of

other people" may help to create a lively, participative and democratic community, while *megalothymia* – the desire "to be recognised as superior to other people" is likely to create a dysfunctional community, riven by power struggles.

I am very grateful to Jack Whitehead for bringing Fukuyama's book to my attention. Reading the chapter on *The Rise and Fall of Thymos* caused me to radically reframe part of my educative practice. Instead of trying to help others by telling them stories of my learning, I came to realise that it would be much more helpful to enable them to share stories of their learning. I now believe that sharing our stories with others is one of the most effective ways of creating "transformative spaces." I think this will be evident in the account of the storytelling workshop in the next section and later in the thesis when I look at my work with the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* Action Inquiry Group.

Related to this is the importance of "voice" which I have come to understand something about from feminist writings such as *In a Different Voice* (Gilligan 1993) and *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy et al. 1986). "Transformative spaces" are places where hitherto silenced or muted voices may be heard. For both women and men to find their own voices means recognising and trying to counteract the effects of gender conditioning and cultural oppression. As a man, I am particularly conscious of the "white noise" of stereotypical men's talk, merging and drowning out each unique voice. Finding my own voice in the police service continues to be a struggle with the constant risk of rejection and alienation[9]. Creating spaces where we can each "speak our truth" is one way of healing the alienation (mine and other's) that Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury identify, in the quotation that opens this chapter, as a primary purpose of human inquiry.

A decade ago, when I became Director of the Police Accelerated Promotion Scheme, I came across Mike Pedler's ideas about "learning communities" (Pedler 1981). I was struck by what he calls "the riddle of the liberating structure", designed ironically to move people into greater autonomy. For three years, my colleagues and I wrestled with what this meant in practice as we sought to create an effective learning

[9] See *Police Stories* – Section entitled *Leaving Home,* for example.

environment for future police leaders. Bill Torbert's description of the ironic leadership to which we aspired proved tantalisingly elusive:

> Instead of attempting to hoard power or to give it away, the leadership uses the power granted to it by institutional status, by its members, or by its own experiential authority to perform a kind of psycho-social jiu-jitsu whereby the members gradually come to question their own assumptions about the nature of power and begin to experiment with the creative power to constitute a new world. (Torbert 1978) cited in (Pedler 1981)

Today, I am much less comfortable with the idea of "psycho-social jiu-jitsu". There is a very fine line between ironic leadership and manipulation. Now I am striving to find ways of co-creating "transformative spaces" in a more open, aware and participative way and I hope this too will be evident in later examples.

I have also learned from Jurgen Habermas's concept of "communicative space" (Kemmis 2000) and Joyce Fletcher's description of "discursive spaces" (Fletcher 1998), but it is these ideas of mystery, mutual recognition, voice, liberating structure and community that have been most influential upon my thinking and my practice. They do not supplant the kind of embodied knowing that I draw from *A ritual for separation* and many other such experiences. Rather, they complement, deepen and enrich my understanding of "transformative space".

Inquiring into my practice

I want to focus now on how I am offering to others what I am learning from both of these strands of my own self-healing (storytelling and transformative spaces). The medium for this is to share some reflective writing and correspondence about a daylong workshop I conducted at Bath University in March 2000 for some twenty members of the CARPP and SOLAR post-graduate research communities. It was billed as an inquiry into storytelling as meaning-making and community-building.

To help me use the occasion to inquire into my practice as storyteller and educator, I asked Jack Whitehead to video the day. In the event, he was only able to stay for the

morning so missed the group-work and discussion during the afternoon. Two hour-long sessions during the morning (in the first of which I facilitated the group in sharing their earliest childhood memories of story and in the second of which I told the story of *The White Bear King Valemon*) were recorded [10]. Jack later sent me copies to review together with some comments about his contrasting impressions of the two sessions. His comment that he believed he had seen a fundamental contradiction in my actions/relationships provoked me to reflect carefully on my experience of the day and some of the other comments I had received from participants and to write the following response. I think it will give you a flavour of the day – the nature of the transformative space we created together – as well as opening up some important differences between sharing our own stories and participating in story at a mythic level.

Storytelling Workshop
3rd March 2000

Jack, now that I have managed to view the videotapes you took during the storytelling workshop, I want to pull some thoughts together about the experience. Partly, I am prompted by your remarks on several occasions since then about your very different impressions of the two activities that morning – sharing our early childhood memories of story followed by my telling of *The White Bear King Valemon*. Once, you told me that you had a "deep sense of unease" at the end of the storytelling session and, recently, you wrote in an email (22nd April) about what you see as a "fundamental contradiction in my actions/relationships". Let me quote you verbatim:

"Let me share with you what I see as a fundamental contradiction in your actions/relationships. I know I'm working with you on what I see as the positive pole in this dialectic. I think you will see this contradiction when you have time to look at the tapes I made of your storytelling session"

You have not told me the nature of your unease or what contradiction you see in my actions/relationships, preferring me to look at the tapes and report my own feeling on doing so. In a minute, I will do just that. But let me first surmise what you may be thinking. I imagine that, as you filmed the first activity, focusing your camera and attention on each of us in turn,

[10] I considered including some clips from the video to exemplify my practice but the pace of the day was deliberately slow and it would require several lengthy excerpts to illustrate the two sessions

you felt very present and involved. You probably shared our growing sense of community as we spoke from the heart about the place of story in our childhood and, sometimes, how that resonated into our adult lives.

Then, as you filmed me telling the story of *The White Bear King Valemon*, you focused your camera and attention almost exclusively on me as I held the space for nearly an hour. This time, you were sitting to one side and slightly behind the rest of the group who were arrayed as an audience as I "performed". I imagine that holding that single focus through the camera lens required an intense effort of concentration. I guess that you felt excluded from the ebb and flow of the story and, since I consciously avoided looking at the camera (and hence at you) somewhat alienated from me as the storyteller.

Now I want to explore the experience from my perspective and, as far as I can from feedback, also from others' points of view. As I do so, I shall try to remain open to the possibility of discovering the "fundamental contradiction in my actions/ relationships", though I do not necessarily assume that there is one in this case. (I know such contradictions do manifest themselves in my behaviour quite frequently!) I am also open to the possibility that your perspective was affected (distorted?) by operating the camera and/or, because you left immediately after the story and were not part of what developed and emerged during the afternoon.

The workshop was billed as "An inquiry into storytelling as meaning-making and community-building." The invitation was to "meet each other through the medium of a traditional story" and "to use this material as a basis for sharing personal stories and/or stories of our inquiries." The idea of introducing ourselves to other members of the group by sharing our relationship to stories in childhood came later – almost as an afterthought – when designing the structure of the day. A flyer for the day was circulated round the SOLAR, CARPP and MSc communities. It clearly struck a chord since twenty people turned up and stayed all day (hitherto unknown in my experience of CARPP!) The level of interest in the workshop seemed to validate the relevance of stories and storytelling in our lives and research.

The first video begins with me introducing the day by telling the group about my fascination for the subject and checking out the day's programme. After ten minutes or so I invite the group (seated in a circle) to "Take a breath and go back to your childhood... What are your earliest memories of stories and storytelling? Were you told stories, did you read them, listen to radio or watch television? Was there an absence of stories in your childhood?" Most of the group closed their eyes as they retrieved these memories. Then I invited them to share these

thoughts and recollections with a neighbour. I did this because, having articulated these personal stories to each other, I knew from experience that it would be easier to speak freely in the big group.

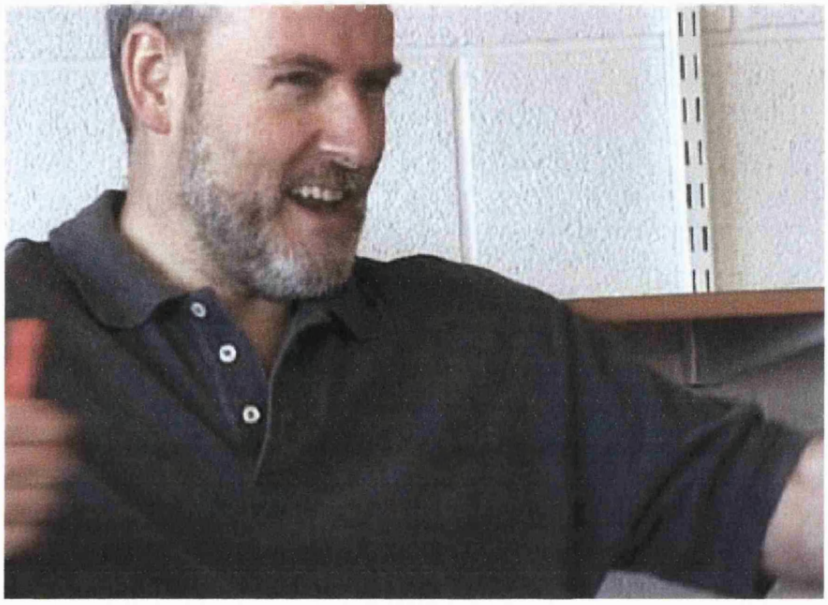
Then we began to speak out – I offered the injunction, to "Take what time you need. We have to manage the time together, but there is no need to rush." Suzie Morel went first. "I was the last to arrive so I'll begin," she said and went on to paint a vivid word picture of her childhood spent on horseback, meeting all manner of folk, including the vet who threatened to shoot her horse if it did not get better. I asked two or three questions to draw Suzie out a little because I wanted to establish a "norm" of openness and discursiveness.

Then came the moment Paul Roberts wrote to me about when, from across the room, he began to speak then queried whether we were going round the circle in turn (perhaps picking up on my unspoken expectation that we would). After a little discussion, I confirmed that we would go round the circle which, as I later explained to Paul, followed my intuitive sense that it would result in a safer and more predictable pattern and help us manage the time better (albeit at the possible expense of greater spontaneity and creativity).

After a few more contributions (from Peter Reason, Nigel Caldwell, Lynn Ashburner and Emrys Jenkins) to whom I again asked a few encouraging questions, we seemed to find our way into a natural flow. Watching the video, I am struck by a wonderful quality of mutual attentiveness in the room. Our facial expressions seem to indicate the resonance of our stories in each other's lives. In a gentle way, we expressed a tremendous range of emotions; warmth, care, compassion, humour, shock, fear and surprise to name but a few. We spoke of intimate moments with family and loved ones, of stories told and untold, of stories unheard, of favourite books, of Listen With Mother, of schooldays and holidays, of growing up in different cultures and countries and of our own children.

You asked me what I <u>feel</u>, Jack, looking at the video and the answer is delight and fascination at the amazing richness of our lives and our willingness to share them. I see, in my own countenance, a sense of confidence and ease. I am both facilitating a process and part of it. There is space for me to become present through the stories I loved as a child – and those that were hidden from me. I notice, with pleasure, my joke about Biggles and my fur-lined flying jacket. There is one particular moment, towards the end of this session, when I am smiling with delight and reaching out with my arms to embrace an imaginary feast of stories.

As I watch myself in this moment I think "I really like that person." Moments later, a second – more rueful – thought occurs. "And it has only taken me fifty years, hundreds of hours of therapy and one divorce to get to this point – not such a bad deal really."



I am delighted by your comment Jack that you are "'indescribably' impressed" with this tape. Again, I quote your email (22nd April) in full:

"I was 'indescribably' impressed with the first tape. I think you brought alive in a profoundly human way, values which people are trying to live by. In Michael Connelly's and Jean Clandinin's sense of 'stories to live by' you enabled, in a delightful way, people to tell the group, within ¾ minutes really important things about their lives and values. Really Great"

I feel that this tape shows me at my best, in my practice as an educator, expressing (again I quote your email) "a loving warmth and value for the other which helps them to find their story worth living for." There is, perhaps, some corroboration of this in a comment about the workshop in an email (12th March) from Paul Roberts:

"Overall I really enjoyed it and noticed your capacity as a workshop leader to create a climate of interest, inquiry and passion for the story. This quality of presence that you have seemed more important than any particular set of skills or competences in influencing mine and other's learning – though, of course, one's presence and skills (being and doing) cannot be neatly separated"

Now to the bit you have been waiting for, Jack – my responses to the second tape. Here, with the rest of the group sitting and lying in front of me, I tell the story of *The White Bear King*

Valemon which I set up by reading Rumi's poem *Storywater,* through which I invited them to "enjoy this being washed with a secret we sometimes know, and then not." Watching the video, I am conscious of myself "in performance". I am aware of holding multiple awarenesses; of the audience (I notice my eye contact moving around the room to draw them in and gauge their reactions), of myself (I notice when I lay down the "bones" of the story and when I let my imagination run free and describe the images I can see), and of the story itself (I notice my own fascination with this rich and wonderful tale).

The question I ask my image on the screen, moment by moment is: "Are you serving the story or is it serving you?" If the former, then I can enjoy the exercise of my craft in a good cause. If the latter, it becomes something hollow – a mere inflation of the ego. As I look into my own eyes, I answer the question: "Yes, I am serving the story – and enjoying myself in the process."

I look critically at my own telling. Is it a good choice of story? Does it have enough substance to engage this group of twenty very bright people for the rest of the day? Will our modern sensibility allow sustained interest for a whole hour? The story took longer to tell than I had expected and the energy and attention of listeners ebbed and flowed. The princess is lost in the forest for a long time – a dark night of the soul enlivened only by the pleasures of playful repetition. I notice how quietly I speak and think that I should inject more variety of tone and volume. I see where I occasionally get lost in my own inventiveness. I have a strong sense of engagement with the audience (something that may not have been obvious to you Jack from behind the camera).

Of course, this is a very different situation from that depicted in the first tape. Power relations within the group are quite different. Sharing stories of our childhood quickly became a democratic and participative process in which we were all equal before each other. In contrast, power relations were temporarily altered as I told the story and others listened. Yet, Robert Bly sometimes talks about storytelling as a different kind of democracy – where we are all (and this includes the storyteller if told with good intent) equal before the story. So, I return once more to my primary question: "Did I serve the story," and answer: "That was my intention." Only others can judge if I served it well enough.

Then I have to ask what use we made of the story throughout the day – and was the gift of attention repaid with learning and insight? Certainly, the tape recordings of our subsequent discussions reveal a lively and intense debate, though they were not able to capture the work done in small groups as individuals explored some of the "untold stories" within the story by speaking in role as, for example, the glass mountain, the bear, the oldest daughter, the Great

One, the carpenters, the poor mother of four children. This was powerful stuff – a means of expressing sometimes neglected parts of ourselves.

An email from Elaine Fernandez (23rd March) gives some indication of the opportunities for learning provided by the story:

"I'm sorry it's taken so long, but I want to say thank you very much for the story workshop. I'm not sure what detail to give you to let you know what a good day it was for me. I remember you talked some time ago about making space for others through storytelling (I think). For me the relaxed, uncluttered form of the day was really welcome. The listening and the speaking were important, but what was particular about the day for me was the sense of building. It was a sort of constructing day.

I'm aware that I said I disconnected from the story you told at the point where the children disappear and the parents, seemingly untouched, continue to enjoy their own passion as opposed to being frantic at the loss. And that you came in half way through my being the woman with the four children who gets salt beef for winter... The most wonderful part of that day came after that, in the very small group... but this "best bit", where as Eden put it I spoke my real truth, would certainly not have come about without the other bits. So again, thank you."

So, there you have it, Jack. I see difference but not contradiction between the two tapes. Of course, I may still be blind to whatever you can see. Maybe we are looking for (and hence finding) different things. Maybe we need to watch the videos together so you can point out the images that generate your sense of unease. Others, too – particularly Paul and Eden (who were both there) – might confirm or disconfirm the contradiction you have identified, or offer alternative interpretations.

I have tried to write this in a spirit of non-defensive exploration, though I fear I may not always have succeeded. It has certainly helped to deepen my own inquiry into storytelling as meaning-making and community-building. Above all, I am delighted to have taken the risk of exposing my practice as an educator to the critical, but not unkindly, eye of colleagues in the SOLAR, CARPP and MSc communities. It feels like part of my coming of age as a practitioner and researcher.

Jack and I met a few weeks later to discuss our respective experiences of the day. We agreed to differ, respecting each other's viewpoints: Jack holding to his view about the pre-eminent educational value of enabling others to tell the "stories they live by" and me continuing to claim equal status for engagement in the mythic realm. Much later, I circulated my paper to everyone who had attended the workshop and received

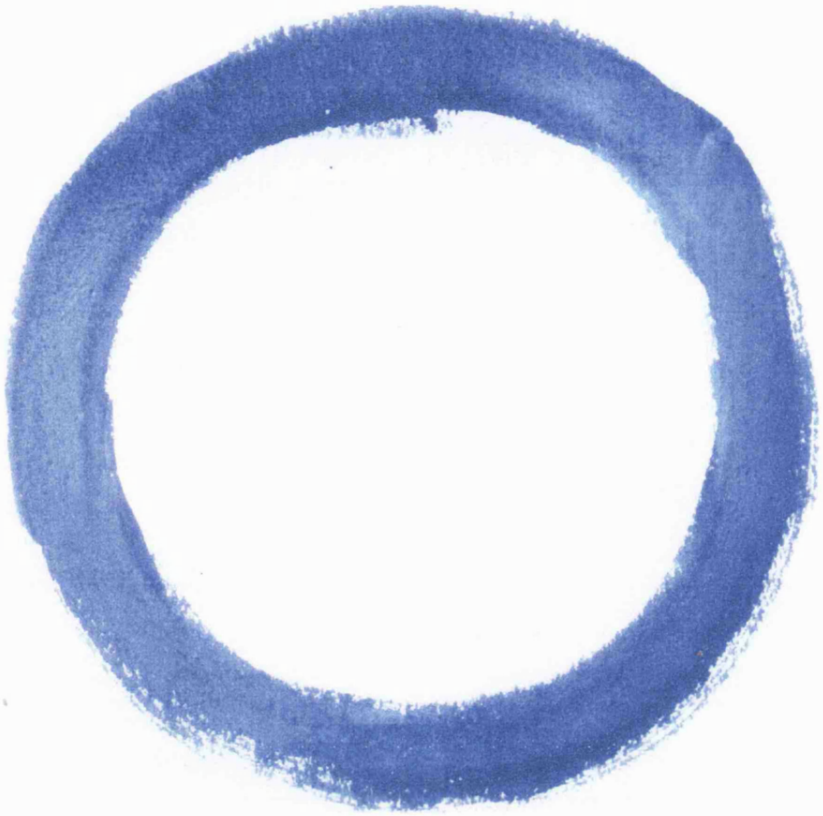
several additional responses to the day including an email from Peter Reason (28th February 2001) from which I take the following extract:

> My own sense of the day was that the earlier personal storytelling was intended and served to bring us present into the room with each other and with story. I did not imagine that we would continue in that mode. The second part, in which you told this wonderfully long story, served a different purpose, which was to take us away from personal material and into the archetypal and to explore story as a way of doing that.
>
> Personally I was much more engaged with your storytelling than with the personal stories. I saw these latter, on this occasion, as a necessary part of a process toward the archetypal. I was much more engaged with the images, which float around me even now, as I remember the wood, and the mountain, and the struggle to move on through life which the story tells me about.

Peter's comments offer further support for my belief in the healing power of story – not least the vividness of the images he is still carrying from *The White Bear King Valemon* nearly a year later. Storytelling (both personal and mythic) and the role of stories in creating transformative spaces and renewing our sense of self, our narrative identity, continue to fascinate me and I shall go on looking for ways to share what I am learning from this particular healing journey.

Opening a circle

Finally, in this section, let me return to presentational knowing. For several months during 2000, I painted mandalas and circles as a way of expressing my being in the world, writing a brief reflection on each one. There is one that, to my mind, somehow conveys some of the qualities of "transformative spaces" and some of the practices required to create them - though it was not painted with that intent. I wonder what meanings it will convey to you.



Immediately after painting it, I wrote in my journal:

> The image of a single Zen circle – an *enso* – came to mind so I cleaned the brush and went straight into it. I would have liked to complete the circle in one movement but the brush does not hold enough paint, and I needed several rotations to get enough depth of colour and to achieve a reasonable degree of symmetry.
>
> I really like this one. The colour is soft but quite intense. The brushwork is apparent and has some interesting variations. I think I have managed to avoid overworking the paint. Sometimes I have to go through the motions to find my creativity. It is a delicate balance between persistence and effortlessness.

Looking at it now, the image evokes many different meanings for me. I am intrigued by the relationship between the circle and the space it contains. Without the line, we would not be aware of the space; without the space there would be no line. When we come together to create "transformative spaces" for our learning and healing, I have a

similar sense of marking out a space – a temporary container in which to explore and expand our potential as human beings.

Painting the *enso* was a deliberate act just as, when leading a group or facilitating an educational process, I make conscious interventions to help us build a safe learning environment. These may be suggestions about time boundaries, confidentiality, self-disclosure, expressing our feelings, respecting each other's experience, possible activities or any number of other issues. Yet, though deliberate, both are also improvisatory, applying paint in response to the emerging image and engaging creatively with the unfolding group dynamic. To both, I bring an aesthetic (and kinaesthetic) sense of proportion and relationship – working the brush or making process interventions with the aim of creating a "good enough" space.

Part of this judgement is how firmly the space needs to be held. In the *enso,* this is apparent in the diameter of the circle and solidity of the line. In groups, we each balance trust and risk, acceptance and self-disclosure, content and process. When facilitating, I have a particular responsibility to hold this multiple attention in order to help the group shape itself, moment by moment, into the *vas* – the alchemical vessel in which transformational learning is made possible.

Working to create transformative spaces and painting *ensos* are both paradoxical practices. As artist and as educator, I seek to bring all that I know and all that I am to each essay and, at the same time allow myself to be fresh, spontaneous and responsive to emergent form. As I said above in my journal entry: "It is a delicate balance between persistence and effortlessness." Sometimes the results are pleasing to the eye; sometimes they fail to satisfy. Sometimes, groups fail to reach their potential for transformational learning, sometimes the experience is extraordinary and life enhancing – truly part of a healing journey.

Commentary

In this commentary on *Healing Journeys*, I focus on three more of the twelve distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity described in *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*, exemplifying their embodiment in, and emergence from, my practice of *living inquiry*. I have chosen Breadth and Depth, Epistemological Balance, and Relatability as particularly, though not exclusively, relevant to this chapter and I invite you to bear them in mind throughout your reading of the thesis.

Breadth and Depth: As I said in *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* when describing this attribute, my interests are wide-ranging and I have consciously inquired into many aspects of my life. Honouring this diversity is important to me and I was not prepared to take the easier route of focusing this PhD on a single area, though the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* collaborative inquiry project (described in *Chapter Five: Reshaping my Professional Identity)* alone produced more than enough material to have done so. Balancing breadth and depth is important: if the span is too narrow it loses context, if too wide it loses focus and becomes insubstantial. In *Healing Journeys* you will see how I have used Rumer Goden's Indian proverb of the four rooms to illustrate the breadth of my inquiries into self-care and self-healing before delving into the realm of storytelling and narrative identity.

This feature of the text mirrors my practice of *living inquiry* - I follow my curiosity and energy, paying attention to what in Gestalt terms would be called "the field" as well as what is figural. I think you will see in this chapter how this kind of dual awareness allows me both to pursue particular interests in depth and to make interesting and novel connections, for example between storytelling, transformative spaces and Zen painting.

Epistemological Balance: This quality is demonstrated by the extent to which my different ways of knowing are acknowledged and represented in the text. In *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*, I characterised my plural epistemology as emphasising personal (tacit) knowing, metaphorical and imaginal knowing, embodied knowing, complex and emergent knowing, uncertainty and unknowing with a particular concern to redress the conventional academic imbalance between (undervalued) *mytho-centric* and

(valorised) *logo-centric* forms of sense-making. My commitment is not simply to champion but to enact a new balance between *mythos* and *logos* in my life of inquiry and in my thesis.

I think you will agree that all these forms of sense-making and knowing are represented throughout the text. But, in *Healing Journeys*, I believe that I have gone further than that and succeeded in integrating many of them in a coherent multi-stranded chapter that moves easily between experiential narratives (e.g. *Inquiring into my practice*), fictive stories (e.g. *The man who lived as a king*), the spoken word (*Jumping Mouse*), graphic images (*enso*), reflective writing (e.g. *A ritual for separation*) and the exploration of literature and development of ideas (e.g. *narrative identity* and *transformative spaces*).

You may not be surprised to learn that, as I look beyond the completion of this thesis, I feel a growing energy and interest in taking these ideas - about storytelling as a healing practice - much further and am contemplating taking a full-time three month training in the art of storytelling next year when I leave the police service after thirty years.

Relatability: I have located this commentary here because, although this attribute is relevant to the whole text, the question of relatability is explicitly addressed in this chapter. I argue in the *Introduction* and in *Healing Journeys* that it is the personal and the particular – not abstract generalisations – which enable us to relate to each other's stories. In *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*, I liken this to Michael Bassey's notion of *relating* to the research findings of the study of a singularity (Bassey 1995) but I am going further than that in suggesting the possibility of a unity of insight between the individual and the universal. Helen Simons comes to the same conclusion in her paper on *The Paradox of Case Study* (Simons 1996) when she says:

> By studying the uniqueness of the particular we come to understand the universal.

I believe that many of my narratives of inquiry are presented in such a way that you will find yourself able to "relate" to them. Of course, I cannot know this. Only you, the reader, can judge whether this is so. I think that you might also find that

sometimes, as in *Driftwood and Dogmeat* (my open letter to my best friend Chris in *The Men's Room*) and *The man who lived as a king* (a fictive account of separation and renewal in *Healing Journeys*), my stories connect with archetypal themes that give them what I call "mythic resonance" – connoting those narrative epiphanies where ontology, epistemology and cosmology meet. I wonder too if you experience any of this quality in my telling of the Native American story *Jumping Mouse*. Did you recognise aspects of your life of inquiry in the story? Were any of the characters or situations strangely familiar?

Interlude IV

The point of no return

Saturday 3rd March 2001

I'm scratching at the page feeling impatient, frustrated that I do not seem able to write with ease and fluency. That will come again I'm sure but, just now, I am physically and emotionally drained as I struggle to manage all the competing demands on my time and resources; a new Director at work, multiple projects, attempts to influence the future of leadership development in public services, writing articles, research, consultancy, friends, family, relationships. I want to celebrate the healing effects of integrating linguistic, conceptual and propositional forms (logos) with spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of inquiry (mythos) in *Healing Journeys*, but my body cries out for rest, fresh air and healthy exercise and I weep for my son Tom whom I love but cannot cure. Continuing to write this thesis is dangerously close to becoming an unwelcome chore and I must pause to see where I am going.

Perhaps everyone feels like this at some point in such a long and demanding process. It is four years since I joined CARPP and ten months (and 60,000 words) since I started writing this thesis. I am approaching the point of no return. The thesis is taking shape – as much by what I omit as by what I include – and I must decide whether to commit myself to this emerging form and go on or go back and either give up or start again. Friends ask me how the writing is going and I generally make a point of saying that I'm writing the thesis I want to write and that time will tell if it is to be judged worthy of a PhD. I used to be rather pleased with this somewhat cavalier response but as it gets closer to completion, my earlier naïve confidence is tested (and sometimes shaken) by the prospect of having to satisfy examiners that my thesis meets the university's criteria – particularly as to the extent and merit of the work.

Since writing *Healing Journeys* I have begun to address this issue in "electronic dialogue" with my supervisor Jack Whitehead. The following exchange gets to the heart of the matter:

From Jack Whitehead
17th February 2001

Hi Geoff. Just thinking about our last chat when you were saying about Peter [Reason], Judi [Marshall] and me having 'strong frames' which you didn't want to 'fit into'. I couldn't agree more with this commitment of yours to create your own frame. What I'm curious about is whether your thesis will be making an original contribution in relation to ideas about living inquiry, living theory, living (educational) standards of practice and judgement, and/or whether your originality of mind and critical judgement will be comprehensible in relation to other ideas.

What I'm both excited and fascinated by is the process through which you appear to me to be sharing both your own living educational standards of practice and judgement. What I mean by this is that you are showing/explaining the processes of your own "valued" learning (your higher education) as you engage in the creation of your own curriculum vitae which I understand to be the course of your life.

From Geoff Mead
19th February 2001

Hi Jack. I don't want to give a flip response to your email... because it prompts some serious thinking. I am confident however that, by the time I finish the thesis – especially the chapter I am going to write on Living Inquiry – that I will have been able to articulate my contribution clearly and position it in relation to the ideas of others. I could describe what I am doing as showing my learning as I create my own Curriculum Vitae but I want to find the words and forms of expression that emerge naturally from out of my own process of inquiry rather than adopt someone else's terminology!!

I notice my familiar resistance to constraining my emerging understanding within other people's conceptual frames and to adopting other people's language instead of coining my own. Yet I also acknowledge the central point in Jack's e-mail, that in creating my own conceptual frames I am also responsible for making them intelligible to others. One way in which I believe I already do this is by engaging authentically with the ideas of other writers, researchers and practitioners in my own text. Thus, whilst I eschew "sandbagging" (Bassey 1995) my writing with unnecessary academic references, I do acknowledge sources that have influenced my thinking and my

practice and I explore points of similarity and of difference between them. I draw on theoretical resources as and when I need them rather than to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of a particular field of inquiry. Having said that, I also want to focus much more closely in due course, on how what I am learning about the nature of Living Inquiry might contribute to an emerging Scholarship of Inquiry.

On reflection, I feel reasonably confident in my ability to develop my hard-won ideas about Living Inquiry and make them comprehensible to others – though I still need to check that my belief in the emerging form of the thesis is well-founded and not mere pig-headed obstinacy. I share my "doubts" with Jack Whitehead in a further e-mail exchange.

From Geoff Mead
26th February 2001

Jack, I think I need to take my "doubts" seriously as important data. Rather than brush them aside it feels important to confront them now in the light of your comments about whether my originality of mind and critical judgement will be comprehensible in relation to other ideas and in the light of who I would like to examine my thesis.

From Jack Whitehead
26th February 2001

Hi Geoff. I do like what you say about taking your doubts seriously. My own feeling is that in living inquiry your questions change as a necessary part of the learning which is taking place in the inquiry. I feel that there is something constraining now in your question [What is it to ask what this thing – "Living Inquiry" – is?] It seems to me to have served its heuristic influence and you are now ready to modify it to more fully represent your living inquiry.

My own feeling is that you are not just asking a question – you are asking, researching and answering different questions about the nature of your life of inquiry as well as using your "What is it to ask...?" question as a "frame" for your whole inquiry. Maybe it is time for your question to move on?

Ouch! This is a serious challenge to my thinking. What is wrong with my question? I was delighted to find this way of framing my inquiry when I read Peter Mellett's paper (Mellet 2000) because it seemed to offer a way of inviting you, the reader, to join me inside my exploration of living inquiry. Yet, in subsequent conversations with colleagues at Bath (Jack Whitehead and Jackie DeLong), I realise that "I" am missing from the question. It is phrased impersonally, in the third person – "a distant academic exercise that boring people would do." It is a clever question but not an engaging one, nor does it adequately convey my tremendous sense of excitement about whole-life inquiry.

It would have been easier in many ways to have followed a more conventional route, perhaps to have focused on just one area of inquiry – masculinity, loving relationships, self-healing, or educative influence. In drawing on the diversity and breadth of all these living inquiries, there are inevitably limits in terms of the depth to which I can follow any one of them within the confines of the text. But the challenge I have set myself is to inquire into the interwoven personal and professional practices through which I create my living standards of practice and judgement and, as Jack suggests, this necessitates asking, researching and answering many different questions about the nature of my life of inquiry. Some of these questions are implied in the prayer to Hermes in the *Prelude.*

- How can I live well as a man in the world?
- How can I enter more fully into loving relationships?
- How can I find healing for body and soul?
- How can I exercise my (educative) influence for good?

Whilst other, more collaborative questions are emerging as I write, for example:

- How can I work with others to heal ourselves through storytelling?
- How can I work with others to create "transformative spaces"?
- How can I work with others to improve our own leadership practice?
- How can I work with others to influence leadership in public services?

I shall not attempt to list all the questions here. The important thing for me is to recognise that whilst some questions persist, Jack also makes a crucial point when he says: "... in living inquiry your questions change as a necessary part of the learning, which is taking place in the inquiry."

I am content that the overarching question: What is it to ask, what this thing - "Living Inquiry" – is? has served me well up to now as a robust container for my thesis; one that has both encouraged further questions to emerge and provided a useful framework for the text.

It is a question that demands a dialogic and reflexive response of the kind apparent in much of my writing – for example as I reflect upon my experience of ritual in *Healing Journeys* and as I engage with others through my practice as storyteller, consultant, educator, police officer etc. It is also a question that enables me to treat the writing process itself as a form of inquiry with cycles of action (in writing the full chapters) and reflection (in the interludes between the chapters). Of course, these are not mutually exclusive activities but their form does offer a pleasing congruence with the intrinsic pattern and flow of Action Research.

But I do wonder why I lapsed into such an abstract way of expressing myself: one that seems so much at odds with my intentions. I guess I feel some self-imposed pressure (despite my earlier strictures) to conform to more conventional academic modes of thought, to render my inquiries within a known (and therefore acceptable) framework. Yet, I am appalled by texts which distance the author from the process of knowledge creation and I passionately strive to embody what I espouse within my practice. So I need to think again about how I represent and give coherence to my learning. Instead of an abstract question of the kind privileged by the "post-agricultural mind" I might look to the kind of powerful image or metaphor demanded by my leaning towards the ways of an "epistemological hunter-gatherer" (Brody 2001)

I stand at the point of no return and I am ready to go on, trusting that others will be open to the frames I am creating, just as I remain open to a wide range of ideas from academic and other sources. In Richard Winter's wonderfully liberating phrase, I shall continue to pursue my living inquiries as a form of "improvisatory self-realisation"

(Winter 1998) offering them in the hope that Jack Whitehead was right when he said to me in a recent email.[1]:

> I think you are creating an appropriate form of communication which will "speak" to others in ways which will influence their own learning about how to live their values more fully in their practice

I am ready to go on and extend my inquiries out into the world, to see how I can use my energy and influence to help others learn and heal. This exactly mirrors where I am in my life right now, focusing outwards as well as inwards, needing to put all the "inner work" to good use, developing new educational processes and collaborating with others to influence social formations such as the police and other public services for good, through my practice as an educator.

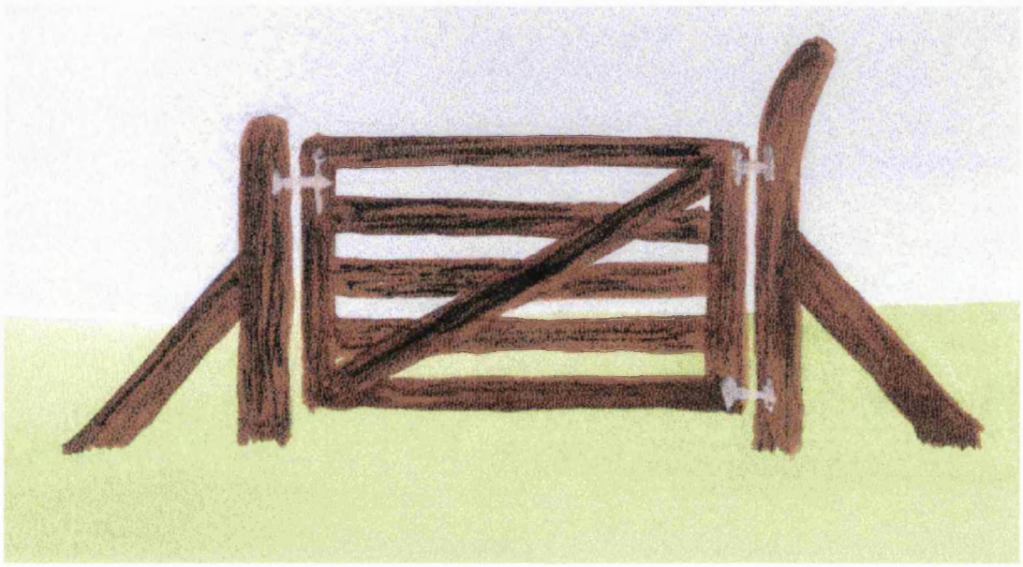
Thinking of myself as an educator is a relatively recent shift in self-perception, though I have designed and lead educational programmes for many years, both as a private consultant and in the police service. I can identify quite precisely when I embraced this new identity. A journal entry on 17th February 1999 reflects on an experience of being challenged at a workshop on *Stepping into Leadership with Henry V*, run by my friend Richard Olivier, to identify my purpose in life.

In a guided fantasy during the workshop, floating on the river of imagination, I found the image of a five-barred gate, standing closed but unlocked in the middle of a sunlit field. When I got back from the workshop I painted the image over and over again until it became clear enough to speak to me. My purpose seems to be about unlatching and opening this gate so that I (and others) may pass through. In doing so we pass between worlds. Each time the gate opens we somehow subtly redefine our position in the world. We are renewed and the world changes. In Gestalt terms, they are "aha" moments that unlock old patterns of understanding and behaviour and open up new meanings and thus new possibilities for choice and action.

I find my joy, my bliss in "midwifing" these moments of rebirth. I know that I am not alone in this. I guess such bliss is shared by all educators - all those who "lead others out". What is it Kahlil Gibran says of being a teacher?

[1] E-mail from Jack Whitehead, 15th February 2001

If he [sic] is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind (Gibran 1926)



Some have chosen the way of therapy. I have chosen the way of work and organisations - but (Jack - how long have I resisted this idea?) I am an educator, though not solely and not necessarily a police educator.

My purpose - that which I serve - is learning and I realise that there is something about the way in which I am using the word "learning" that embraces both "life" and "love". The kind of learning I value is that which is life enhancing, increasing the possibilities for being and doing in the world and which also leads to a fuller expression of loving relationships. Despite bitter experience and much evidence to the contrary I have not lost my optimism or my faith that these are possible in the domain of work. I seem to be finding my vocation.

I am moved to quiet tears as I re-read this and connect with the profound sense of service that this vocation represents. As George Bernard Shaw said in *Man and Superman*:

> This is the true joy in life; this being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one. The being a Force of Nature – not a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments

> and grievances constantly complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

Perhaps this vivid image of the five-barred gate will serve to give coherence to the stories of my living inquiries. I offer it in the spirit of what Hugh Brody calls "Hunter-Gatherer knowledge":

> Hunter-gatherer knowledge is not dependent on absolutism or dichotomies. It is inductive and intuitive; its conclusions emerge by allowing all that has been learned to process itself. Reasoning is subliminal, and therefore has the potential to be more sophisticated, more a matter of assigning weight to factors, than can be the case with linear logic. It is a way of gaining and using knowledge that also seeks for continuity and renewal. It is not tied to attempts to control or change the world. (Brody 2001)

I invite you to join me as I step through the gate once more to inquire into my practice as an educator.

Chapter Five

Reshaping my Professional Identity

In the two weeks since I finished writing *The point of no return,* I have continued to reflect on the overarching question that my thesis seeks to answer and it strikes me now as both much simpler and more profound that I had imagined.

Amongst the mock graffiti on the cover of *Human Inquiry* (Reason and Rowan 1981) is a new version of an old music hall joke: "Who was that research I saw you with last night? That was no research, that was my life!" And the fundamental belief that living and inquiring are inseparable leads to my question (this time in my own words): What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry?

In previous chapters I have inquired into my life as a man, my conduct in loving relationships, my search for healing and now I want to inquire into my professional practice. Immediately, however, I hit a snag. What is my profession? After nearly thirty years in the police service, the obvious answer is: *Policeman*. But the reality is less straightforward. I have many professional interests – policing, organisational consulting, research, storytelling, leadership development to name a few – so that I find it difficult to define a single professional identity. Of course, in these postmodern times, I am far from alone in this.

Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin (Connelly and Clandinin 1999) address this phenomenon in their study of teachers' professional identities. Their central argument, though developed in the specific context of teaching in schools can, I think, be applied much more widely to the question of professional identity. This quotation from the opening chapter of their book *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice* suggests a narrative basis for defining and understanding professional knowledge, identity and practice, which I find compelling:

> Increasingly, as our work progressed, we came to see teacher knowledge in terms of narrative life history, as storied life compositions. These stories, these narratives of experience, are both personal – reflecting a person's life history – and social –

> reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live... this context is immensely complex and we adopted a metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape to help us capture this complexity.

I find this metaphor extremely helpful. It holds and conveys something of the multiplicity and diversity of my own professional life. With others, I inhabit such a landscape. As I survey and explore this professional knowledge landscape, I shape my own professional identity which, in turn, is embodied in my practice and brought to life in the stories I tell and am told. My professional practice is directly related to my intimate knowledge of this landscape and its possibilities. Sometimes I work within its borders and constraints. At other times, for example when seeking to influence the behaviour of social formations (such as the police service) I am trying to change the landscape a little.

Connelly and Clandinin use the phrase "stories to live by" to refer to professional identity, bringing together narrative understandings of both personal practical knowledge (i.e. individual practice) and the professional knowledge landscape. This seems to echo the notions of *narrative identity* and *self-story* that were so prominent in my search for healing.[1] The personal and the professional intermingle and sometimes amalgamate in our stories.

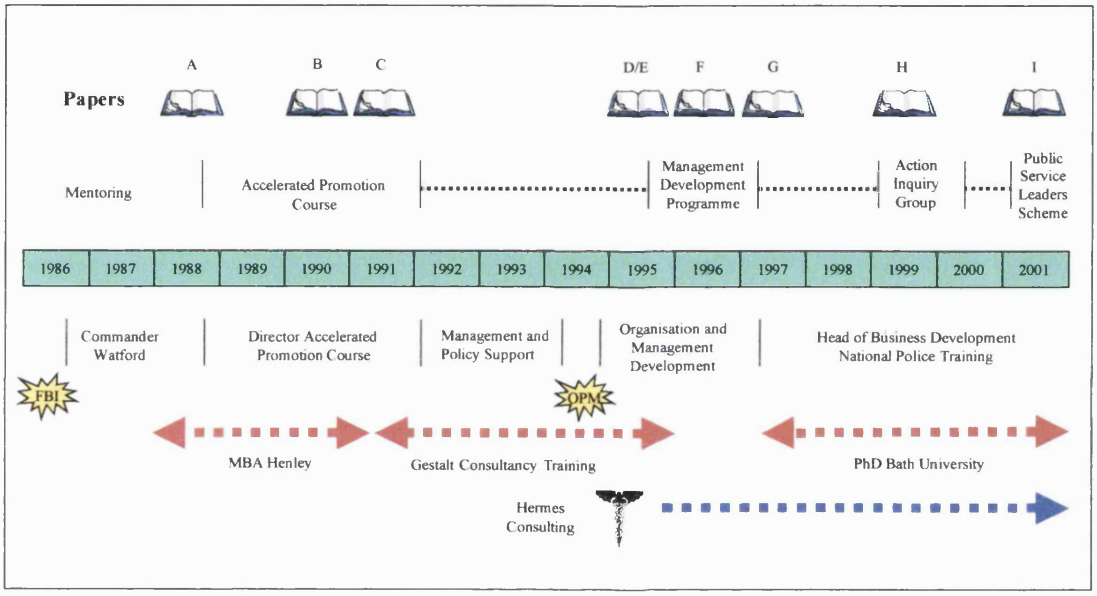
> We view the landscape as narratively constructed: as having a history with moral, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions. We see it as storied. To enter a professional knowledge landscape is to enter a place of story. (Ibid p2)

The map is not the territory

In attempting to unravel (or should that be ravel?) my professional practice, I need to look back at the territory I have been exploring for the past fifteen years or so. Explorer-like, I have brought back a few artifacts, a host of travellers tales and a map – not an accurate Ordinance Survey map but a crude sketch, drawn from memory.

[1] See *Healing Journeys*

I have chosen to begin in 1986 because by that time I had begun to ask questions about my professional life having hitherto more or less accepted a conventional view of policing and attempted to meet other people's expectations of my various roles. I talk about this "awakening" in *Police Stories*.[2] If you have not already done so, this would be a good point at which to turn to the appendix and read this account of my professional life in the police service. Originally written in 1998, it includes many of my "stories to live by" though they tend to follow quite closely the narrative line represented in the map by the list of job titles immediately below the datum line.



A sketch map of my professional knowledge landscape

My period as Sub-Divisional Commander at Watford was immediately preceded by three months in Quantico, Virginia on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy programme. I grin with pleasure as I remember the unexpected opportunity to take time out, return to serious study for the first time since leaving university in 1972, and re-think my leadership practice.[3] In 1988, for the first time, I found a public forum in which to share these ideas, writing an article for the FBI Management Quarterly on my approach to changing the organisational culture at Watford. A key realisation for me (and one that has stuck) was that bringing about change – whether

[2] See *Police Stories – Opening up*
[3] See *Police Stories – Coming into my own*

personal, professional or organisational – requires us both to do different things and to do things differently. It is the latter that generally causes most difficulties!

As the top line of the map indicates, inquiring into my practice and writing about what I am learning has become a habit. Since 1988, I have regularly punctuated my professional life with similar forays into the public domain: sometimes for academic publication, sometimes for police and other practitioner journals. The following key to these papers indicates the range of issues I have explored in this way. These too are part of my professional knowledge landscape and I will call on particular references from time to time in the context to which they refer.

KEY TO PAPERS

A – Organization Culture – FBI Quarterly (Mead 1988)
B – Challenge of Police Leadership: Contribution of the Special Course (Mead 1990)
C – Mentoring: A Police Case Study (Mead 1991)
D – Millenium Management for a New Age Police Service (Mead 1995a)
E – Middles, Endings and Beginnings: Organisational Death and Rebirth (Mead 1995b)
F – Danger: Men at Work (Mead 1996)
G – A Winter's Tale: Myth, Story and Organisations (Mead 1997)
H – Mentor and Athene: Supervising professional coaches and mentors (Mead, Campbell et al. 1999)
I – Developing Ourselves as Police Leaders: How can we inquire collaboratively in a hierarchical organisation (Mead 2001)

Returning to the map, I also want to highlight here my six-month secondment to the Office for Public Management (OPM) in 1994.[4] Again, a significant turning point, taking me outside the police service for the first time and expanding my professional knowledge landscape by introducing me to the commercial practice of organisational consulting across the public sector. It was this experience that prompted me in 1995 to form my own company Hermes Consulting as a vehicle to continue and develop this work. Through this medium, I have followed my interests in coaching, mentoring, supervision (of consultants, coaches and mentors), conflict resolution, board development, large group facilitation and, latterly, storytelling in organisations.

[4] See *Police Stories – Stepping out*

Twice I have held posts in the police service with a formal responsibility for designing and delivering educational programmes: first as Director of the Accelerated Promotion Course (APC)[5] – formerly known as the Special Course – a national "high fliers" scheme for outstanding young police officers selected as having the potential for senior command: second as self-styled Head of Organisation and Management Development for the Hertfordshire Constabulary[6] when I introduced the Management Development Programme (MDP) for middle-ranking police and civilian managers. Sandwiched in between these appointments, was a spell as Head of Management and Policy Support in Hertfordshire[7] – a difficult and dispiriting time giving rise to some of my darker stories and enlivened only by the challenge and satisfaction of training as an organisational consultant at Metanoia, a Gestalt Psychotherapy Institute in West London.

Currently, I work as Head of Business Development for National Police Training – an internal role with no remit to design or deliver educational programmes. Nevertheless, through my work at CARPP, researching for this PhD, I have convened and facilitated an eighteen-month long collaborative inquiry amongst middle and senior ranking police and civilian managers in the Hertfordshire Constabulary on the theme of *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* (known as the AIG – Action Inquiry Group). At the time of writing, I am also involved in putting together the Action Inquiry element of the new Public Service Leaders Scheme for prospective senior leaders in the National Health Service, Civil Service, Local Government, Police and Voluntary Sector, launched by the Cabinet Office in March 2001.

Taken together, the various landmarks on the map of my changing professional knowledge landscape show how the centre of gravity of my professional identity has shifted from *policeman* to *educator,* though I was not able to articulate this unambiguously until the image of the gate[8] revealed to me that my purpose, that which I serve, is learning and encouraged me to proclaim: "I am an educator, though

[5] See *Police Stories – Doing what comes naturally*
[6] See *Police Stories – Working on the edge*
[7] See *Police Stories – Fighting back*
[8] See *Interlude IV: The point of no return*

not solely and not necessarily a police educator." To which Jack Whitehead responded (in an email dated 27th March 2001):

> I do think that you are an educator. I think educators do seek to influence the learning of others for good. I think you are like me in recognising that you can't claim to have educated anyone other than yourself because your educative influence has to be mediated through the creativity and critical judgement of the other before the learning can be judged as "educative"

Jack is right in saying that I share this view of education, though it has taken me many years to clarify my thinking and develop my practice in this direction. Furthermore I am, as Jack might say, "a living contradiction" (Whitehead 1993), that is to say my practice often diverges from the educational values that I espouse.

In the rest of this chapter I want to inquire more deeply into my practice as an educator through some of the "traveller's tales" and "artefacts" I have accumulated over the past fourteen years or so exploring my professional knowledge landscape. Though I could perhaps tell other stories that derive from my wider consultancy practice I have decided to concentrate on the three major police educational programmes for whose design and delivery I have been responsible:

1. Accelerated Promotion Course (APC) 1988-1992

2. Management Development Programme (MDP) 1995-1997

3. Action Inquiry Group (AIG) 1999-2000

I think this approach will provide the best opportunity to unearth and track any underlying themes and patterns over time – as important indicators of my embodied values, my living standards of practice and judgement. In doing so (though not my specific aim in this thesis) I acknowledge that this amounts to creating my own "living educational theory" (Whitehead 1993). In exploring, understanding and conceptualising my educational practice, I am greatly influenced by Jack Whitehead's work in this area as well as by our regular supervisory conversations. My sense of

where we part company is that I am interested in my educational practice as part of a wider set of living inquiries - responding to the question: What does it mean to live my life as inquiry? Whereas I think, for Jack, the identity of educator is so well established and deeply embedded that he might subsume my question within: How do I improve my educational practice? This is a fine point but an important one for the form of this thesis in which my living inquiries into other aspects of my life (as a man, in loving relationships, in search of healing) stand in their own right as equally significant and valid inquiries as this exploration of my professional practice as an educator.

Therefore, as I explore each of these three police educational programmes, I am holding a variety of questions in mind. First to do with *purpose*: What was I trying to achieve? What did I want to use my educative influence for? What were my motives and intentions? Second to do with *means*: How did I go about it? In what ways did I use my educative influence? What ideas, models and theoretical resources did I draw on? Third to do with *outcomes*: What was the result? What evidence do I have that my educative influence brought any benefits to individuals, to the organisation or in terms of improved policing?

As I examine the three programmes in turn, I think you will see how – as a researcher – I come to enhance my own sense of the rigour of my scholarship of inquiry by progressively articulating claims in relation to my educative influence that are more specific, grounded in data and supported by evidence. In relation to the first programme, I acknowledge that there is "precious little documented evidence" and relate a couple of critical incidents from memory to illustrate my practice. In the second, I am able to draw upon some written comments from participants to support my claim to be using my educative influence for good. In the third, I draw upon a mass of documentary material (including an independent evaluation) to substantiate particular claims made in a published paper about the programme.

I am also equally interested in how the personal and professional come together in these tales: In what ways were these experiences part of my life as inquiry? Where do the official ("sacred") and unofficial ("stories to live by") stories coincide and

where do they conflict? Some of these issues, too, may come out in the telling and in my reflection on the telling.

A passion for police education

Accelerated Promotion Course

When I left Bramshill in 1976 after graduating from the "Special Course" I swore I would never go back.[9] In the end I did return, twelve years later as Course Director, determined that never again would students be subjected to such a harrowing second-rate experience. Taking this job on, in 1988, with no formal training as an educator, was a huge challenge and, ultimately, the source of enormous satisfaction. In *Police Stories,*[10] I refer to this period as "my professional Camelot – a golden time in which I was the right person in the right place at the right time."

During my three years "at the helm" (an appropriate metaphor for Director, I think) I built on the work of my predecessor who had made a radical shift from traditional didactic teaching methods to *facilitated self-development.* He was strongly influenced by what was then called the "Lancaster School" of self-development – John Burgoyne, Roger Stuart, Tom Boydell, Mike Pedler and by John Heron's work on facilitation at the Human Potential Resource Group at Surrey University. I followed his lead and these early works (Burgoyne and Stuart 1978; Boydell and Pedler 1981; Heron 1989) continue to shape my understanding of andragogical practice.

What I found on my arrival was a brilliantly conceived course but with a staff group that was disaffected and incapable of working collectively, falling student numbers and several major elements of the programme (including a highly elaborate and expensive operational simulation) in complete disarray. I devoted myself to closing the gaps between the rhetoric and the reality of the course; recruiting and leading an effective and committed tutor group, making the curriculum more coherent, the delivery more robust, doubling student numbers, and actively managing the

[9] See *Police Stories – Getting on*
[10] See *Police Stories – Doing what comes naturally*

numerous and complex in-force elements of the programme. As Director I was consciously trying to help participants achieve at least three major outcomes.

First and foremost was to equip themselves with the interpersonal skills and awareness to survive and thrive as whole people in the, sometimes hostile, climate of the police organisation, particularly during their passage through the middle ranks (the narrowest bottleneck in the cultural sausage-machine). I wanted them to be able to handle themselves well and not be afraid to challenge their environment en route to the top. Too many of my contemporaries had adopted either the "Animal Farm" strategy (keeping one's head down and waiting until senior rank before trying to change anything – with the result that most of the pigs became farmers without realising that they had been assimilated to the point where they could no longer see what needed to be done) or the "Kamikaze" strategy (challenging everything and everyone indiscriminately no matter how slim the prospects of success – with the result that they crashed and burned, falling off the promotion ladder or leaving the service altogether). There had to be a better way.

My second main objective was to contribute to student's long-term development – to prepare for an unknown, and unknowable, future. Given the time frame (ten years or so before reaching senior command), the speed of change and the degree of uncertainty about future roles, it seemed to me that the most useful focus would be at the meta-level, i.e. learning to learn, developing the ability to absorb and learn quickly from new experiences. Our curriculum and learning methods were therefore designed to this end (see table overleaf).

Thirdly, I wanted students to connect with their own passion and sense of purpose. There was much talk at the time of "the butterfly men [sic]" who never settled long enough in one job to make a real contribution to police effectiveness, who made a career out of having a career. I voiced my expectations to each new intake, reading a favourite passage from Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *Flight to Arras* (Saint-Exupery 1987):

> He [sic] who bears in his heart a cathedral to be built is already victorious. He who seeks to become sexton of a finished cathedral is already defeated. Victory is the fruit of love. (p239)

The Special Course/APC was my cathedral in the heart and I did my best to live this vision every day with mixed results.

Learning Areas	Learning Methods
Practical knowledge Professional knowledge	Unstructured group process Structured experiences Reflection and discussion Instruction and modelling Practice, coaching and feedback Individual and group tutorials Focused workshops and seminars Self and peer assessment
Sensitivity to environment Communicating Problem solving Assertiveness Helping skills Team skills	
Mental agility Creativity Resilience Proactivity	Outward Bound Exercises and simulations Mentoring Networking Action Learning Audit
Self-knowledge Learning ability Humility	

Elements of Special Course/APC Curriculum[11]

I cannot say with any real confidence how successful all these efforts were. It was a long time ago, things have moved on and we did not keep much data or evaluate the programme very rigorously. I can say, back at Bramshill in a different capacity ten years later, that I see many of my former proteges returning on the Senior Command Course before promotion to Assistant Chief Constable. We occasionally exchange fond memories over a glass or two and I sense that many of them still value the

[11] Table adapted from Mead, G. (1990). "The Challenge of Police Leadership: The Contribution of the Special Course." Management Education and Development **21**(5): 406-414.

experience of those months together. However, there is precious little documented evidence to substantiate any claims I might make for having used my educative influence for good.

The Special Course (which I later renamed the Accelerated Promotion Course, having carried the label "Special" like a millstone round my own neck during my early years in the service) is described in some detail in an article I wrote for Management Education and Development after two years in post (Mead 1990) and I researched the mentoring element of the course for my MBA dissertation (Mead 1991). Rather than go over this ground again here, there is probably more to be learned about my practice from a couple of "critical incidents" – key moments that are still vivid in my memory.

The first of these occurred a few months in to my new role whilst helping a small group debrief an exercise. One member of the group (let's call him John) was given feedback by several colleagues that they found his habit of smiling at their critical comments ingratiating and irritating. This was news for John who had believed that his equable and well-mannered persona was both popular and effective. As he struggled to make sense of this (still smiling it should be said) I had a strong hunch that if we could enable him to express the anger that seemed to be lurking below the surface, he might gain some useful insight into his behaviour. However, I also realised that I did not have the knowledge or skill to facilitate such a process properly. It would have been unwise and unethical to deliberately plunge him into such deep and uncharted waters, so we pulled back from the brink and stayed at the level of "talking about" his anger rather than expressing it.

A few days later, I spoke to my friend Graham Stickland, a much more experienced management trainer and developer, about this incident and asked him what he might have done. He endorsed my hunch as probably accurate and described how he might have set up a safe exercise (pushing and experiencing resistance) to enable John, if he so wished, to amplify and then express his repressed anger. "Brilliant," I thought and asked Graham where he had learned this kind of technique. "Gestalt therapy," he replied and recommended a particular therapist. Taken together with an earlier experience of discovering my own lack of emotional literacy which I described in the

opening paragraphs of *Healing Journeys* as a "defining moment", this was sufficient for me to decide that, for professional as well as for personal reasons, I should enter therapy myself, which I duly did (eventually qualifying several years later as a Gestalt based organisational consultant[12]).

The educational principle that this incident established for me, once and for all, is that as a facilitator of other's learning, it behoves me (for practical and ethical reasons) to work on my own process at a deeper level than I expect to be working with others: "Educator – educate thyself."

The second incident arose from my belief that there should be no assessment of students during the developmental phases of the Special Course/APC at Bramshill (though workplace performance should be rigorously assessed). I had been led to believe when I took over as Director, that this was in fact the case and that was clearly the "contract" with students. You can imagine my horror when, about ten months later, I discovered that there had actually been covert assessment of students (albeit in broad categories of achievement) and that this information had been passed to members of the Extended Interview Panel who had selected them for the course, some of whom had direct responsibility for the same students' future careers. I was appalled. I could not condone this deceit or let it continue. My initial response was to contact the Director of Extended Interview, a senior and well-respected Chief Constable, who had some difficulty seeing what I was making all the fuss about but accepted that (at the very least) I found myself in an intolerable position and agreed that he would forgo the assessment information, in favour of a personal briefing from me on the general progress of the course, without naming individuals.

This seemed an acceptable compromise, so my next task was to speak personally to every group of students on the course, tell them what had happened, apologise for my (unwitting) deception and for the fact that others had been "economical with the truth", accept and endure their outrage with as little defensiveness and as much dignity as I could muster, and promise that it would not happen again. We got over it. My honesty and forthrightness mitigated the damage that had been done – as one

[12] See *Police Stories – Stepping out*

student said at the time: "Thank you. I've never known a Chief Superintendent apologise for anything before."

My resolve on this matter was put to the test once more, at the annual meeting with the Commandant of the Police Staff College and the Director of Extended Interview at which they consider evidence and recommendations from students' own Chief Constables about their continuation on the course and further promotion. When considering a borderline case, the Commandant turned to me and said:

> "Well Geoff, you saw him on the course. How did he get on?"
>
> "I'm afraid I can't tell you that, Sir. As you know, students are not assessed at Bramshill whilst on the course," I replied.
>
> "Yes," he rejoined. "But you know whether or not he's any good. How did he get on?"
>
> "Even if I was able to tell you Sir, I think your decision should be based on the evidence of his performance in-force, according to the prescribed process."
>
> "Mr. Mead," his voice rising. "You will tell me what you know."
>
> "No Sir. I will not."

At that point the meeting was adjourned and I was taken aside for a private "audience" with the Commandant.

> "Mr. Mead, you are making life very difficult. Are you sure you know what you are doing?"
>
> "I believe so, Sir. I have given my word to the students and will not break it. This is a resignation issue for me."
>
> "Very well," for he was not an unreasonable man, "can you suggest a way out of this impasse?"

> "If you feel you do not have enough information on which to base your decision," I offered. "I could go back to his Chief Constable and ask for further evidence and clarification."

So that is what we did. Honour was satisfied and I kept my job. The student in question was withdrawn from the scheme by his Chief Constable on the grounds that his performance in-force was not good enough to warrant early promotion. I had guessed that might well be the outcome and I could indeed have "saved us all a lot of time." But the decision was made for the right reasons, by the right people and the issue of assessing students on the developmental phases of the course at Bramshill was not raised again during my tenure.

Management Development Programme

Returning to Hertfordshire in 1992 after three years at Bramshill was difficult. As I wrote in Police Stories[13] and in *Danger: Men at Work* (Mead 1996), I left an environment in which I was valued and passionate about my work, for one in which I felt alienated from colleagues and from the dry managerial work I was called upon to perform as Head of Management and Policy Support. After two years I managed to arrange a secondment as Visiting Fellow to the Office for Public Management[14] and, fired up by this experience, began to think that it might be possible to create a role for myself in Hertfordshire that would allow me to contribute some of what I had learned about management development (MD) and organisation development (OD) over the past five or six years.

Peter Sharpe, the new Chief Constable, agreed that I should return to Hertfordshire and spend a few weeks exploring the possibility of a role which he called "working in circles around the boxes." During the next month or so, I conducted twenty-five in-depth interviews with senior managers and other interested parties assessing our needs in relation to MD and OD. A key message I brought back was that we were "leaving people behind" – particularly middle managers, whose jobs were being dramatically changed by the adoption of Total Quality Management. This approach,

[13] See *Police Stories – Fighting back*
[14] See *Police Stories – Stepping out*

deriving from Japanese and American management gurus called for a shift from the traditional top-down command and control hierarchy to a bottom-up support pyramid, and placed responsibility for decision-making closer to the "frontline" – thus leaving middle managers in the paradoxical position of being held more accountable than ever before for operational performance and being expected to slacken their customarily tight supervisory reins in favour of team development and individual coaching.

The unintended result was the de-skilling and de-motivating of a key group of staff, crucial to the organisation's performance but seen by many (both from "above" and "below") as anachronistic and resistant to change. This logic persuaded the Force Policy Group to commission me to research, design and deliver a programme to address the development need of police and civilian middle managers, and to establish a Management Development Steering Group, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable to oversee and support my work.

In preparing a Management Development Strategy for the force and in designing the Management Development Programme (MDP) I thought back to what I had learned from my time as Director of the Special Course/APC. One major difficulty we had encountered then was the separation of classroom learning from the daily realities of working life – so a prime concern in the MDP was to integrate them as far as possible and, by doing so, to meet both individual development needs and wider concerns about managerial competence and organisational performance. My ideas were enriched and informed by notions of the *learning organisation* or *learning company* that were gaining currency at the time. Once again, Mike Pedler, John Burgoyne and Tom Boydell were leading the way with *The Learning Company Report* (Pedler, Boydell et al. 1988), *Towards the Learning Company* (Pedler, Boydell et al. 1989), and *The Learning Company: A Strategy for Sustainable Development* (Pedler, Burgoyne et al. 1991). Their work and the Foundation for Management Education paper *Management for the Future* (Barham, Fraser et al. 1988) all pointed to a highly focused approach to training provision, characterised by the convergence of work and learning.

My second underlying objective was to construct a programme that would cut across some of the old cultural norms of the organisation – particularly the traditional

separation of the Constabulary into two camps: police officers and civilian support staff. This divide also tended to reinforce a parallel split between men and women (the majority of police managers being male with the reverse pattern among civilian managers). I also wanted to soften the rigid rank/grade hierarchy by inviting a broad band of middle managers to take part. All these aims could be tackled together by judicious mixing of the various learning groups.

A third (undeclared) goal was to enable me to get involved in some "hands-on" educational work once again. I had found my vocation at Bramshill and missed it dreadfully. I knew that I had the skills to facilitate high quality learning and wrote myself into the design as co-facilitator of all the major "set-piece" events. It would be a great opportunity to hone my skills and develop my educative practice.

By September 1995, the MDP was ready and about sixty people came forward to take part, supported by their Divisional Commanders and Heads of Department. So began the first annual intake of a scheme that has endured for six years and provided development opportunities for over two hundred and fifty middle managers. Unlike the Special Course/APC, I have not published a description of the course design or methods. Perhaps the simplest way to give you an indication of what it looked like is to reproduce a summary of the course aims and curriculum from the original explanatory pamphlet.

MDP – AIMS and CURRICULUM

I am very conscious that these bare bones do not convey anything of the quality of participants' experience or of the nature of my educative practice. Despite "hot debriefing" each element of the course and a formal evaluation, little remains on record of participants' views, though I do have a few transcripts of conversations with several MDP "graduates" who responded to an invitation to meet at Bramshill in December 1997 to review their learning with me. Of course, these are highly selective accounts – I was looking for positive outcomes – but they may give some feel for what was achieved.[15]

[15] Pseudonyms have been used to preserve confidentiality

The Aims of the MDP

The Hertfordshire Constabulary is committed to developing the skills and abilities of its managers and has established a Management Development Programme to improve their overall effectiveness to meet the changing demands of their jobs by:

- Meeting an agreed set of management standards and competencies
- Promoting self-development as a continuous process
- Providing focused and systematic support for self-development
- Contributing to the integration of police and civilian managers
- Enhancing awareness of the wider context in which managers work
- Monitoring and evaluating the programme against agreed criteria
- Helping managers who wish to obtain external qualifications
- Complementing existing management training and development opportunities

How does the MDP work?

The programme is based on a set of twelve units of competence required by an effective manager in the Hertfordshire Constabulary. These are derived from the Middle Management Standards developed for National Vocational Qualifications, customized to meet our particular needs. Each unit contains a number of more detailed and specific elements.

MDP Competency Framework

1 Continuous improvement
2 Working with our community
3 Policing plans and policies
4 Customer focus
5 Resource management
6 Performance management
7 Developing teams and individuals
8 Working relationships
9 Recruitment and selection
10 Information management
11 Personal organisation
12 Interpersonal skills

Phase One

Participants will be provided with a checklist which, with the help of their line managers, will enable them to identify their training and development needs. Feedback from a variety of sources will be used to complement rigorous self-assessment.

Phase Two

Early in the programme, mixed groups of about twelve police and civilian managers will attend an intensive three day residential workshop at which they will use the information they have gathered together with individual and group exercises to produce Personal Development Plans for the next 12 - 15 months.

Phase Three

The workshop leaders will help participants determine their priorities and find various ways to get their needs met. There will be a strong emphasis on using learning opportunities in the workplace, but a range of methods, including short training courses will be available.

Phase Four

Participants will also form smaller Action Learning Sets which will continue to meet for the duration of the programme, sometimes with the help of a facilitator, to provide a forum for self-development as well as exchanging information and good practice.

Phase Five

A senior line manager in the participant's own division or department will act as a coach/mentor throughout the programme. This kind of arrangement helps to ensure that learning and development are translated into improved performance and tangible results in the workplace. Short training courses will be provided for those who need to brush up and develop their coaching and mentoring skills.

Phase Six

At the end of the programme which will last about 12 - 15 months, there will be a full evaluation of its effectiveness and participants will be encouraged to identify ways of meeting their ongoing development needs.

Sara: I arrived at the door of the MDP feeling very devalued, de-motivated and not supported. The value of it for me has been a new support network which has enabled me to get through the last eighteen months, to get some positive feedback from the people I met, to learn some new personal development skills, to question people who criticise me, to allow myself to have time. I've also decided that I can look after myself and put myself first in many situations where previously I would have put myself last.

Mary: In my own life, there are the deals and adjustments I've had to make to do with health which have coloured my perceptions of what value I need to get out of the years from this point onwards... I've looked at how I'm approaching work and trying to judge whether I'm following my own agenda or whether I'm allowing the agendas to be dictated to me.

Dave: The communication side of it is becoming far more important in terms of facilitating, negotiating... It is that sort of people interaction... I can sort of see that I'm an individual and I've got needs and actually I need a bit of looking after now and again... and other people probably need the same.

About ten days after attending the Phase Two residential workshop, which I co-facilitated with a colleague, Alec Parrott, another participant sent an unsolicited email to the Chief Constable about her perceptions of the event:

Andrea: The MDP Workshop was a unique and fascinating learning experience for me personally, and I know for many others who have attended the programme over the last two years. It was uniquely different and significant for me because it was about being helped to change WHAT I am doing, rather than the common experience of a training course teaching me simply to UNDERSTAND more about what I SHOULD BE DOING. "Learning about" doesn't always lead to managers doing things better. This workshop didn't educate me, in fact it didn't "teach" me much in the traditional sense of the word, but much more importantly, it helped me DEVELOP. It was about self-awareness, self-development and learning... about being helped to change BEHAVIOURS... about how to change things in the REAL WORLD... Management is very much about relationships and the workshop really made management, as a whole person activity, a reality. It was physically, emotionally and intellectually draining! So much more than the usual information and education on a training course. And I feel that I am significantly better equipped to manage, as a result of my experience.

These glimpses into participants' minds lend some support to my claim to be using my educative influence for good. All these statements are congruent with my wish to serve "the kind of learning which is life-enhancing, increasing the possibilities for being and doing in the world and which also leads to a fuller expression of loving relationships."[16] Andrea's email to the Chief Constable is an especially powerful affirmation of the value of the MDP to, at least, some people. However, I am also aware that they do not attribute insight or learning to any particular intervention I might have made as a facilitator. Rather, they tend to substantiate my claim to exert educative influence through my ability to affect policy-making, secure resources, and design effective educational programmes.

In a recent email (27th March 2001) Jack Whitehead encouraged me to acknowledge my capacity to influence social formations, to "mobilise" a systemic response in support of my educational activities. At the time, I struggled to understand the relevance of his point, but now – thinking about the MDP – I see exactly what he means. I may be fascinated by the micro-skills of facilitating transformational learning, but my real contribution to the police service (to Hertfordshire Constabulary in the case of the MDP) has been imagining and bringing into being several large-scale and enduring educational programmes, through my understanding of organisational politics and my willingness to engage with, and persuade, key stakeholders. With the MDP, as well as designing and delivering the programme, my educative influence was exercised through creating the organisational climate and infrastructure within which learning and development could flourish. I am thinking here of how I involved many senior staff as mentors to participants, of how I established a Resource Centre to support open and self-directed learning, and of how I persuaded the Chief Constable to issue a Development Charter telling every member of the Constabulary what they were entitled to, what they were responsible for, and what they would be encouraged to do to further their continuous learning and development. Thank you Jack for helping me to reassess and appreciate an important and undervalued aspect of my professional (educative) practice.

[16] See *The point of no return*

The only other tangible evidence of the impact of the MDP that comes to mind is the regularity with which its graduates were promoted. This was especially true for police officers (for whom there continues to be greater job mobility and better prospects for advancement). On one memorable day in January 1998, six out of seven people promoted to Chief Inspector had been through the MDP. Some of the civilian managers also achieved notable successes in terms of new jobs and promotion – some finding the confidence and self-belief to look outside the Constabulary to develop their careers.

Action Inquiry Group

In early 1997 (at the same time as I began the CARPP programme) I returned to live and work at Bramshill, leaving the MDP in the safe hands of my friend and colleague, Roger Barrett. For about eighteen months, the vicissitudes of separating from my family and subsequent divorce dominated my life, sapping my energy, turning my thoughts inward, and leaving me with little interest in developing my practice as an educator.

During this hiatus I continued to read widely and gradually, through the CARPP programme, began to engage with various notions of collaborative inquiry – in particular, the form that Peter Reason and John Heron call "co-operative inquiry" (Reason and Rowan 1981; Reason 1988; Reason 1994; Reason 1994; Heron 1996; Reason and Heron 1996). Its democratic and participative ethos appealed to me. As I came across actual examples of co-operative inquiries, I felt that such a process could help me move closer to the ideal of genuinely Adult-Adult relationships in my educational practice.

Although I had left Hertfordshire I was grateful to the Chief Constable for supporting my application for a Bramshill Fellowship[17] and I wanted to put something back into the Constabulary. I hoped that we could build on the perceived success of the MDP and, after some negotiation, launched the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* Action Inquiry Group (known as the AIG) in late 1998. This time, I went into the project not

[17] See *The Men's Room*

just as an educator but as a researcher too. From the outset, I envisaged that the AIG would be interesting and significant so I took special care to record and document the process as fully as possible – with audio and video recordings, photographs and images, transcripts of our meetings, letters, reports and reflective writings – enough material to fill a bookshelf and more than enough material, I suspect, upon which to construct a whole PhD!

As part of the research process, I recently wrote an article which describes this project in some detail – in particular, the politics and practicalities of attempting a form of collaborative inquiry in such an obviously hierarchical organisation. I am hoping that my work with the AIG will prove to be a rich source of inquiry into my educational practice and I think it would be both useful and appropriate to use the full text of the article (Mead 2001) as a "base camp" from which to further explore my professional knowledge landscape.

Developing Ourselves as Police Leaders: How can we inquire collaboratively in a hierarchical organization?

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Introduction

"Improving the quality of leadership is a crucial issue for the police service. Learning about theories of leadership is not enough. What really matters is for each of us to understand and improve our own unique practice as leaders."

This was the challenge taken up by a mixed group of police managers (including the author) in the Hertfordshire Constabulary[18] in an eighteen month long action inquiry – *Developing Ourselves as Leaders*. For most participants, the results have been positive, exciting and tangible (though hard to quantify). However, we also found that doing collaborative inquiry in the police context had particular problems – not least that of creating a safe learning environment in an overtly hierarchical organization in which neither the democratic and

[18] A provincial police force in the United Kingdom (an organization of some 3,000 police officers and civilian support staff).

emergent processes of collaborative inquiry nor the kind of transformative learning claimed by some members of the Action Inquiry Group (AIG) sit comfortably.

This paper will examine some of these difficulties and our attempts to overcome them – hopefully in a way that will prove useful to readers contemplating or actually doing collaborative inquiry in an organizational setting. I shall say something about the *rationale* behind choosing an action inquiry approach before considering some of the *politics and practicalities* of the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project in more detail. Finally, some tentative *conclusions* will be offered on the basis of this experience.

Why Action Inquiry?

As an educator and senior police manager, I have long been interested in the challenges inherent in police leadership and leadership development (see, for example (Mead 1988; Mead 1990; Mead 1995a) By 1998, I had come to the view that all methods of leadership development are based on assumptions (usually implicit) about the nature of leadership. Warren Bennis, one of the most respected and enduring commentators on the subject, described it as the most studied and least understood phenomenon in social science (Bennis 1989). In fact, though common usage sometimes requires it, the word "leadership" has little meaning in the abstract. We might even say that it only acquires meaning in action – "leading" as opposed to "leadership."

My assumptions about leadership reflect this basic epistemological position. I take it that leadership is an active process, not an abstract quality. Leadership is not the prerogative of the few but is distributed throughout the organization: exercised day-to-day by many at all levels. Nor is it a zero-sum game in which the more I lead, the more you follow. Rather, it is a complex and often paradoxical practice, uniquely exercised by each of us in particular circumstances, which we can develop and improve over time.

It therefore follows that effective methods of leadership development must be able to support a multiplicity of individual inquiries whilst holding a common focus (in this case, that of developing ourselves as leaders). They will benefit from diversity of membership – particularly in relation to ethnic origin, gender, level and area of responsibility, police and support staff. Because practice changes over time, it requires an iterative process not a one-off event. And because practice is multi-dimensional it is essential to work holistically across all four domains – experiential, imaginal, propositional and practical (Heron 1992; Heron 1996).

Thus, when I wanted to offer a leadership development programme to the Hertfordshire Constabulary as part of my PhD research, some form of collaborative action inquiry capable of encompassing all these dimensions and domains seemed to be called for. Drawing on writer-practitioners such as Donald Schon (Schon 1983), Mike Pedler (Pedler 1981), William Torbert (Torbert 1991; Torbert 2000), John Heron (Heron 1992; Heron 1996), Peter Reason (Reason and Rowan 1981; Reason 1988; Reason 1994; Reason and Bradbury 2000) and Jack Whitehead (Whitehead 1993), I adopted the nomenclature of Action Inquiry to describe what I envisaged: practitioners coming together as a community of inquiry, encouraging and challenging each other as they engaged in real-time, real-life development over several cycles of action and reflection with the process of the group designed co-operatively to meet emerging themes and interests. I hoped too that the term Action Inquiry would be sufficiently understandable and intriguing to attract potential co-inquirers.

Politics and practicalities

As Coghlan and Brannick (Coghlan and Brannick 2001) observe:

> While doing any research in an organization is very political, doing research in and on your own organization is particularly so... Indeed it might [even] be considered subversive (p64)

Although my experience of doing research was limited, I had got my fingers burned often enough as a senior police manager[19] to be very aware of organizational sensitivities and of the need to avoid activating its "immune response" to the action inquiry project. In the event, political dynamics moved into the foreground on several occasions. Rather than cluster them together, I prefer to consider them in the particular contexts in which they arose.

In hindsight, I can identify six main phases of the action inquiry – outlined in Table 1. In this section, I will follow them in rough chronological order, highlighting the politics and practicalities of doing the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project.

Doing the groundwork

The process of seeking sponsorship and support for the project began in late 1997, about a year before the AIG was initiated, when Peter Sharpe (then Chief Constable of the

[19] See *Police Stories* (www.actionresearch.net)

Hertfordshire Constabulary) agreed to support my application for a Bramshill Fellowship[20]. I wanted to obtain a fellowship for two reasons: because it represented a commitment to fund my studies and, even more important, because it would give my research some official recognition and legitimacy. We were both keen to ensure that I would provide some "return" for this investment in my development and my plan included a proposal to conduct some form of collaborative action research (at that time, in the area of men and masculinities) in the Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Phase	Theme	Main Activities	Timeframe
1	Doing the groundwork	- Personal sanction from Chief Constable - Consultation with influential peers - Get support from HR and Training	Sept 1997 - Sept 1998
2	Getting the group together	- Letter of invitation to 300+ managers - Briefings for 50+ potential participants - Set-up meeting for committed members	Oct 1998 - Feb 1999
3	Creating a safe environment	- Establishing my role as co-facilitator - Contracting "ground rules" for group - Sharing personal stories, hopes, fears	Feb 1999 - April 1999
4	Sustaining the inquiry	- Developing individual inquiry questions - Meetings every six to eight weeks - Holding each other to account	April 1999 - June 2000
5	Accounting for the learning	- Individual papers from members - Extended review of learning - Multiple, creative techniques	Oct 1999 - Feb 2000
6	Bridging the gaps	- Feeding back results to organisation - Presentations at police conferences - Independent evaluation of project	May 2000 - Ongoing

Table 1 – Phases of the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* action inquiry

The Chief Constable's endorsement of my Bramshill Fellowship sanctioned the project in principle and proved invaluable when I began to sound out other potential supporters during the summer of 1998. By this time I was outside the organisation, seconded to National Police Training, and I was anxious to "test the waters" back in Hertfordshire. Over the course of

[20] A national scheme to support police officers researching topics of relevance and concern to the police service as part of higher level degrees at recognised universities

several weeks I had long conversations with several erstwhile colleagues who I felt would be open-minded and sympathetic, whose judgement I trusted and who I knew to be influential "opinion-formers" in the organisation. They were happy to lend their personal support to a collaborative inquiry process (indeed, two of them subsequently joined the group) but encouraged me to reconsider my intended focus on men and masculinities – which they saw as too narrow, confrontative and exclusive.

Their views tended to confirm my own doubts about the readiness of other members of the organisation to tackle this issue "head on." It occurred to me that a more creative approach would be to invite men and women into a space that, by its very nature (i.e. community, collaboration and diminished sense of hierarchy) would challenge deep-seated notions of hegemonic masculinity. Gender issues, including masculinity, might emerge naturally in such a group if they were really as significant in the organisation as I imagined them to be[21].

So I reformulated my proposal to cover a more general inquiry into leadership practice among men and women across the organisation – *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* – and subsequently put it to the Training Manager and Head of Human Resources on that basis. They were both quite excited by the idea and willing to support it, provided it was offered as a complementary development activity clearly outside the scope of the existing structures for management development. This degree of "distancing" from mainstream training activity was understandable and probably quite helpful in differentiating it in the minds of potential co-inquirers.

Even as a senior "insider", getting high level support for the action inquiry project required persistent and delicate negotiations. Powerful players needed to be convinced of the potential benefits of this approach and reassured that, though challenging, it did not represent a fundamental threat to the organisation. In managing the micro-politics of these interactions, I found it helpful to present myself as a "tempered radical" (Meyerson and Scully 1995), as someone authentically committed to the mission and goals of the organisation who is also seeking to bring about radical change in some aspects of the way it does business. This ambivalence – this state of living contradiction – is a powerful spur to action but, as I have written about elsewhere[22] can also be an uncomfortable and uneasy position to occupy.

[21] In the event, the topic arose only once - six months into the life of the group – when we shared our respective experiences of being men and women in the police organisation. I still believe that it is a highly significant issue for the police service which demands (though might still not be ripe) for further research.

[22] See *Police Stories* (www.actionresearch.net)

It no doubt helped that I was also able to call on my track record as director of other successful management and leadership development programmes[23] to establish my credibility and competence in the field. Despite these credentials, doing the groundwork was a slow and painstaking business – but absolutely essential to securing the levels of access and support it would take to get the project "off the ground."

Getting the group together

By October 1998 we were ready to launch the group. Working closely with Roger Barrett the Force Development Manager, a letter of invitation was drafted, refined and sent out to over three hundred middle and senior managers throughout the Hertfordshire Constabulary. We wanted to offer the chance of participating to as wide a range of people as possible without being overwhelmed by potential participants. So, after much debate, we set eligibility-criteria based on rank or grade. Although setting an arbitrary cut-off, these grounds had some logic and were defensible in terms of existing organisational practice.

Between fifty and sixty people responded to the letter by coming to one of the briefing sessions, some of them familiar faces, some new to me – men and women, police officers and civilian support staff of many ranks and grades. To the non-police reader this may not seem particularly noteworthy but such heterogeneity is still comparatively rare in police management and leadership development programmes. The briefings were designed to help people make a positive decision to opt in to the action inquiry or to decide, without any stigma, that it was not for them.

The underlying principle was that of voluntary, informed self-selection. I spoke a little about the rationale for offering this opportunity to focus on leadership and said something about the participative and democratic ethos of action inquiry. I talked about the possibility of transformative learning and asked people to decide if they wanted to take part using their head (Do you have enough information? Does it make sense for you to do it?), heart (Are you intrigued, curious, drawn? Does it feel right for you to do it?), and will (Are you able and willing to meet the commitment? Do you really want to do it?).

I then told the story of *Jumping Mouse* – a wonderful Native American tale of journeying, sacrifice and transformation (Storm 1972). It is a long story – twenty minutes or so – and

[23] Having directed the Special Course (a national scheme for young officers with outstanding potential) from 1988-91, and the MDP Management Development Programme (for middle managers in Hertfordshire) from 1995-1997

telling it felt like a risky thing to do. The possibility of ridicule was high. Nevertheless, I had been talking in a fairly conventional way about a radically different way of learning and I wanted to be more congruent. It was a defining moment. As I looked at the audience I saw some eyes glaze over whilst others began to sparkle with interest – choices were being made. We closed the session with questions and a general discussion and everyone was given a short paper reiterating the main points of the briefing and a reply slip with which to notify their decision within three weeks.

Sixteen people confirmed their intention to take part and we arranged a preliminary meeting in mid February 1999 to resolve any outstanding issues and to set up the inquiry group. Not everyone could make the meeting (a consistent and seemingly inevitable feature of organisational life) but there were enough of us to share some hopes and expectations and to arrange a series of meetings over the coming year beginning with a two-day residential event in April to kick start the inquiry process.

By staging the process of self-selection (invitation, briefing, written reply, preliminary meeting), and with a bit of good luck, we had managed to recruit a manageable number of committed people. It also turned out that the final group was well mixed in terms of police officers (8) and civilian support staff (8), and in terms of men (10) and women (6). There was also a wide spread of police ranks and civilian support staff grades from many different specialties and locations. We could not have asked for a more promising start.

Creating a safe environment

This issue was always present to some degree, and was figural in the early stages of group formation and, again, towards the end when we considered how to feed back our learning to the organisation and beyond. It featured strongly at our inaugural residential event in April 1999. Twelve of us came together at the Police Staff College, Bramshill from Friday lunchtime to Saturday teatime (a fair blend, we thought, of work and personal time). As we moved through the weekend, three main issues about the safety of the learning environment arose.

1. Within the group – how did group members want to behave towards each other and be treated?

2. My role as facilitator – how would I offer leadership and to what extent would I participate as a co-inquirer?

3. Outside the group – what were the appropriate boundaries with the organisation and how could they be maintained?

We addressed the first issue in several ways; sharing our hopes, fears and life stories in a series of creative exercises, gradually deepening trust and empathy by taking small risks, allaying some of our concerns by building relationships and getting to know each other. We also spent some time mid-way through the process generating ground-rules for the group, such as:

- Confidentiality – we own our own stories
- Feedback – challenge with respect
- Listening – allow others to speak uninterrupted
- Honesty – tell it like it is
- Pro-activity – take responsibility for our own learning
- Process – flexible, fun and realistic

The list is neither surprising nor startlingly original. What matters is that these agreements were generated organically by the group on the basis of shared experience. We knew what they meant for us and we never needed to refer to them again.

I found the second issue – my role in the group – a particularly knotty one at first. Clearly I had initiated and convened the group. I was the only person with prior knowledge and experience of collaborative inquiry and, as if this was not enough, I also held the most senior rank/grade. Concerned that these factors might distort the group dynamics and make it impossible to establish peer-relationships, I had played down my role at our preliminary meeting in February, stepping out of the limelight for fear of dominating the group. Unfortunately it left the stage bare so that our meeting was stilted and confusing. It was "good enough" not to put too many people off (though three of them did drop out afterwards) but we could so easily have fallen at this first hurdle. I debriefed the experience with Roger and consciously decided to play a more active role (though still rather tentatively) on the residential event in April.

Two things occurred that weekend that shaped my subsequent role in the group. On Saturday morning, two members of the group challenged me to stop "playing small" and encouraged

me, in the words of Nelson Mandela[24], to allow myself to be "brilliant, talented and fabulous", to "let your own light shine". They made it very clear that they did not need me to stand aside for them to be powerful too. It was a lesson I hope never to forget. Thank you Judy and Carol.

On Saturday afternoon, as we coached each other in formulating our individual inquiry questions, I offered: "How can I lead (in) this process of Action Inquiry with authenticity, integrity and joy?" By making my leadership within the group an object of inquiry, any taboos or awkwardness around it seemed to fall away and I continued to lead wholeheartedly (if sometimes inexpertly) for the remainder of the project. The fact that I had so publicly committed myself as a co-inquirer did much, I believe, to reduce the distortion of hierarchical power in the group. I was personally powerful but not because of my rank.

The third issue – that of the relationship of the group with the wider organisation – also manifested in several ways. Although all members of the group had identified themselves as exercising leadership in the organisation, and all were committed to working in its best interests, for some there were also strong feelings of alienation – a concern that "I can't be me" in the workplace and an equally strong desire to "be me" in the AIG. There was a feeling of unease and a fear of making oneself vulnerable by stepping outside cultural norms.

Some members of the group were actually in hierarchical working relationships (there were three boss-subordinate dyads/triads in the group). Could they deal openly and honestly with each other in the group – and what effect would that have on their outside relationships? For the most part, the "confidentiality contract" and sensitive mutual exploration of these edges defused potential problems – though one member did withdraw from the group because he felt that his presence was inhibiting a more junior colleague. As the group became more established there were few, if any, signs of reticence or reservations about these outside working relationships.

The issues of authenticity and alienation, however, continued to be a puzzle. Why should we (for I shared some of these feelings) be so concerned about the tensions and contradictions between our personal and professional personas? Why were we so driven to explore them? What underlay our intuitive sense that finding some resolution of these dilemmas was crucial to improving our effectiveness as leaders? Paradoxically, it seems that some of the very qualities and activities that are required to achieve high standards of organisational

[24] From a poem by Marianne Williamson quoted by Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech as President of South Africa

performance – originality, creativity, co-operation and relationship-building – are not highly valued in a "command and control" culture.

At the time, Roger Harrison's notions of organisational *alignment* and *attunement* helped me make sense of this phenomenon. Alignment refers to the focusing of individual effort and will on organisational objectives, attunement to promoting healthy relationships and quality of life within the organisation. He argues (Harrison 1983) that a healthy, effective organisation will find a balance between these two dimensions. Perhaps, in a highly aligned organisation, the AIG was providing much-needed opportunities for attunement. The supportive behaviour that was so apparent among group members would suggest that this was so. Indeed, as one reader of an earlier draft of this article suggested, perhaps the most radical (and useful) thing we did was simply to create a space within the organisation in which we could "be ourselves."

More recently, I have found support for this suggestion in Jurgen Habermas's notion of "communicative spaces":

...in which people come together to explore problems and issues, always holding open the question of whether they will commit themselves to the authentic and binding work of mutual understanding and consensus (Kemmis 2000)p100

It is this, says Habermas, which makes communicative action and the healing of the system-lifeworld split possible. It might also help to explain how the strong personal focus in the Action Inquiry Group contributed to some very tangible organisational benefits.

Sustaining the inquiry

Of course, every collaborative inquiry will follow its own unique path but a number of practical issues arose in sustaining ours, which may be of interest. The first, to which I have already alluded, was the difficulty of getting everyone to meetings. We held five interim meetings, six to eight weeks apart with an extended review of our learning at a second residential event in January 2000. We never had a "full house" and no one (not even me) managed to get to all the sessions so we could not afford to be too rigid about what constituted membership of the group. A few dropped out never to return, one person "joined" halfway through and some stayed on the fringe. Nevertheless, there was an identifiable core of ten who remained deeply involved throughout. Work pressures often impinged on meeting times despite pre-arranging the dates of meetings for the whole year – and without such advance planning it is doubtful whether any of the meetings would have been sufficiently well-attended to be worthwhile.

At the residential event in April, each member of the AIG formulated his or her own individual inquiry question under the umbrella: "How can I improve the way I exercise leadership in the Hertfordshire Constabulary?" The focus on our own practice informed each subsequent cycle of action and reflection. As individual inquiries gathered momentum, I found that it took a considerable amount of energy and attention to hold the whole process together. Although we shared the tasks of arranging venues and of "rounding people up" for meetings, a good deal of the work came my way – from negotiating a budget to cover our costs for the year, to writing innumerable letters keeping members in touch with developments and making sure that those who could not get to particular meetings were kept in the picture.

We found that the simple act of sharing our stories, telling each other how we had been getting on with our inquiries, was enormously powerful – both to deepen the relationships between us and as a way of holding ourselves and each other to account. We quickly got into the habit of tape-recording our sessions and sending copies of relevant sections of the tapes to individuals to aid further reflection. Most sessions began with an extended "check in" of this sort and then followed whatever themes emerged. On one occasion, following a "spin-off" meeting arranged by several women members of the group, this lead to a fascinating exploration of gender and leadership. We learned to trust the process of action inquiry and that, in an organisational setting at least, it needs to be sustained by careful cultivation and lots of energy.

Accounting for the learning

Although much of the time we concentrated on supporting each other in our individual inquiries, we were also curious to see what common themes were emerging. This desire seemed to arise quite naturally after about six months and we agreed that each of us would write about what we were learning about our own leadership practice as a result of our inquiries and circulate it within the group. In the event, nine papers were produced, which we took to our meeting in October 1999. We discussed each paper in turn, checking for clarification, offering feedback to the author and noting our own reaction. A few days later, Roger and I met to listen to the tape recording from which we distilled what seemed to be key statements and themes, which in turn were circulated to the group for comment and consideration. Our "mid-term paper" proved to be an extremely useful exercise both in terms of getting a feel for where the group had got to and of providing a mirror to individual members.

Our paths then diverged once more until we came together for an extended review of our learning at the second residential event in January 2000. (See Figure 1 for an illustration of the patterns of convergence and divergence during the inquiry) Again, we met from Friday lunchtime until Saturday teatime at Bramshill – eight of us – collaboratively designing the process on the basis of some questions and principles we had decided previously. We used three different activities to provide accounts of our learning. First, we all brought objects symbolising what we had learned about ourselves as leaders. Each of us, in turn, displayed the object on a central table and spoke about what it meant. The "presentations" were recorded on videotape and the objects gathered together for the weekend to represent and hold the energy of the group.

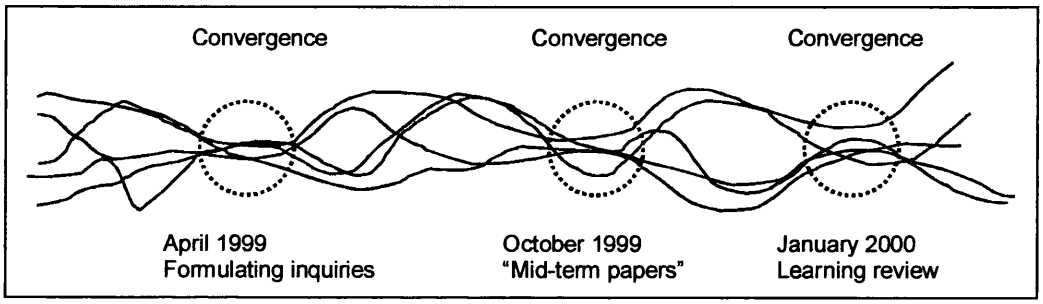


Figure 1 – Convergence and divergence in the action inquiry process

Second, we each made a brief statement in response to the question: "How has your practice as a leader changed and improved through the AIG process?" and were then interviewed by a colleague in a "goldfish bowl" setting so that other members of the group could also listen and respond. The interviews were sympathetic but challenging – friends acting as enemies (and as friends). These were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Third, we spent some time making visual representations – pictures and collages – responding to the question: "What has the story of the AIG looked like for me?" These were then displayed round the room and we took it in turns to speak about our images, using the video camera once more to record the event. The material from all three activities was later copied, transcribed and fed back as a record of the learning and as a stimulus to further action.

We closed the meeting by reviewing what we wanted to share about our learning with others, who we wanted to share it with, and how we could make it safe to do so. As in the early stages of the inquiry, strong concerns were expressed about how "the organisation" would react to what we had been doing. By this time, however, we had come to believe that it was possible to bridge the gaps – provided we were politically "savvy" going about it, for example:

- Challenge but do not confront or criticise
- Choose the right audiences (15% is enough)
- Continue to respect individual confidences
- Seek the new Chief Constable's seal of approval
- Use the learning to add value to existing programmes
- Maintain contact with each other for mutual support
- Be content to sow seeds – don't try to do it all at once

Finally each of us made public commitments to take specific actions to begin the process of communicating our learning to others in our own organisation, and beyond to other researchers and practitioners.

Bridging the gaps

From the organisation's point of view, the most immediate benefits of the inquiry are to be found in the improved leadership practices of its members though, of course, there are so many variables in human behaviour that, whilst one can ascribe these benefits to the AIG, one cannot "prove" the connection. In police-speak, we may have reasonable grounds to suspect, but we cannot prove the case beyond all reasonable doubt. Fortunately, there is considerable room for manoeuvre between these two standards – perhaps we could be satisfied with "on the balance of probabilities"?

Although I have expressed it rather flippantly, what we discovered, as soon as we began to try to communicate what we had been doing, were some significant epistemological gaps, major differences in our understandings of what constitutes useful and valid knowledge. Guy Claxton (Claxton 1997) speaks about a propensity to believe that people have only learned something if they can codify and reproduce it (which may go some way towards explaining the current fashion for leadership competency frameworks and the like). But that would be to oversimplify the matter – what we met, as we sought to communicate our learning, was not hostility but a mixture of interest, pragmatism and scepticism.

I personally briefed Paul Acres, our new Chief Constable, in May 2000. He expressed considerable enthusiasm about promoting "leadership" in the Constabulary and urged me to speak with the Head of Human Resources to make practical arrangements for bringing the benefits of the research back into the organisation. I did so in June and we agreed, in principle, that I would advise and "shadow" an in-house facilitator if another action inquiry group was

formed. To date this has not happened but I have become more closely involved in some other leadership development initiatives in Hertfordshire.

Seeking a wider audience, with three other members of the AIG, I offered a workshop on *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* at the high-profile 2000 ACPO Research Conference[25]. We expected about fifteen participants but found that there was a huge interest in the workshop – over forty delegates came to our session – where we described the process of the AIG, presented some of our individual and collective learning, and made ourselves available for small group discussions. We had some lively debates. Delegates were not unsympathetic but most were somewhat sceptical. Typical of their comments were: "I can see that you are all very enthusiastic and believe that you have learned a lot, but can you prove it?" "How have you evaluated the impact of the course [sic] on organisational effectiveness?" "Yes, I believe you but I'd never be able to sell it back in force without some sort of evaluation."

This was a blow – what better evidence of the effectiveness of the process could there be than us four living examples presenting our learning to the conference? If these delegates, broadly representative of the U.K. police service were not convinced, what chance did we have of persuading others of the value of our approach? But these arguments also pointed the way to how we might begin to bridge some of the gaps. On the advice of one delegate, I approached the Home Office Research Unit with the suggestion that they might fund an independent evaluation of the impact of the AIG. I am happy to say that, after some delay, they agreed that this would be a useful strand of their overall research programme and, at the time of writing (March 2001) the evaluation is actually taking place.

One stipulation of the invitation to tender was that the research should be conducted in a way that is congruent with our own collaborative methodology and contributes to our further learning. As a result, the researcher will be presenting the provisional findings to the AIG for discussion and feedback as part of the analysis. The independent evaluation is a high-risk strategy, and one could argue that no external examination could ever capture the richness of our experience, but if its findings tend to confirm our claims of improved leadership practice, we may be at least halfway across the bridge.

An even more ambitious attempt to influence public policy was sending a short case study on the AIG to the Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit as a contribution to their research and still-awaited report on Public Service Leadership. Within a couple of weeks I

[25] ACPO – Association of Chief Police Officers

found myself sitting round a Whitehall table with members of the "Prime Minister's Leadership Project" team. There was some interest in our work and a shortened version of the case study (which I never saw) was included in early drafts of the report (which I also never saw). Although it was dropped from later drafts "on grounds of space", the Cabinet Office has, in recent weeks, accepted a proposal to deliver the Learning Set element of their new Public Service Leadership Scheme through facilitated Action Inquiry Groups which I will oversee for the next three years. Our work in the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project has provided the foundation from which we can extend the focus on leadership practice and the improvement of service delivery across the public sector.

Conclusions

Did we manage to inquire collaboratively? I think the answer is a qualified "Yes". There is ample evidence in the transcripts of our meetings and in the accounts of our learning to substantiate the claim that, at the individual level, we created and took opportunities for transformational learning: learning that was grounded in our day-to-day practice as we variously engaged with the demands of delivering a high quality service in the complex environment of contemporary policing.

The emerging findings of the independent evaluation confirms these claims, suggesting that members of the AIG have been assessed by colleagues as having become calmer, better able to work under pressure and more strategic in their outlook. Nearly all members of the Action Inquiry Group described the process as worthwhile and rewarding. Here are some of their comments recorded at our penultimate meeting:

"Now I have really got some sense of direction as you can see in this picture..."

"I need a helping hand sometimes to get to where I want to go... that's when I come to the group"

"We shared our inquiries and from that came the learning and the feedback"

"The thing about this has been the honesty... in these sessions we have said when we disagree and why we disagree with somebody"

"It is about light and focus and being able to find your way through the dark"

In case this is beginning to sound like yet another "victory narrative" of action research (MacLure 1996), I should point out that it did not work for everyone. Several members of the

group "dropped out" – generally pleading lack of time though one said she was bringing "too much emotional baggage" to the group and that her continued presence might interfere with other people's learning. Although I think she was mistaken in this regard and overly self-critical, one has to respect her decision to withdraw.

Furthermore, it would be fair to say that – as yet – our collective learning has had less impact. We are still struggling to communicate the benefits of a collaborative approach to leadership development to a wider police audience, hampered by a training orthodoxy that places a high value on *uniformity* (role definitions and competency frameworks), *compulsion* (if it works, everyone should do it), and *assessment* (preferably pass or fail). Perhaps the independent evaluation of our work will lend weight to our own voices. We have certainly learned that, as sense making and knowledge creation move in to the public domain, they can become highly politicized and the potential difficulties of conducting collaborative inquiry in a hierarchical organisation such as the police service should not be under-estimated.

For me personally it has been an immensely satisfying experience. I have become a much more confident and effective practitioner of collaborative learning, more willing to "let my light shine" and more conscious of the choices and choice-points in such a process. We, for example, were quite a closed group: we adopted an informal, loose approach to the action-research cycle: and we focused quite strongly on our individual leadership practices. Had we communicated more openly with others during the life of the group (say by publicising our "mid-term paper"), had we adopted a more rigorous pattern of action-research, had we addressed systemic leadership issues, we may have had fewer (and narrower) gaps to bridge later on. Yet I'm not sure I would make many different choices if faced with similar circumstances. Members of the group came with strong personal agendas, which demanded a high level of safety and, thus, confidentiality in the early stages - and I was reluctant to reinforce the prevailing hierarchical culture by imposing too much structure or discipline on our proceedings.

Like other forms of collaborative inquiry, Action Inquiry is not a standard technique that can be applied (like a coat of paint) to meet every need. It is a sophisticated and powerful approach to human inquiry, with enormous potential to help us improve both individual practice and organisational performance. To realise this potential it must be crafted to its particular circumstances and context. There are no guarantees of success but, with a little courage and a lot of determination, a little imagination and a lot of energy, much is possible.

Critically re-examining the text of the article in terms of my scholarship of inquiry, it is clear that I have made several claims about the outcomes of the AIG that need to be more fully substantiated in the context of a PhD thesis. In particular I claim that sharing our stories in the group was a powerful vehicle for deepening relationships and holding each other to account, that we created and took opportunities for transformational learning, and that the process had tangible benefits for both individuals and the organisation as a whole. Shortly, I will address each of these purported outcomes in turn but let me follow the pattern of earlier sections about the Accelerated promotion Course (APC) and the Management development Programme (MDP) by turning first to issues of intention and method.

Reflecting on my intentions in convening the AIG, I can identify several complementary aims. In terms of "first person inquiry" <which Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury define as addressing the "ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act with awareness and to choose carefully and to assess effects in the outside world while acting" (Reason and Bradbury 2000)> I was looking for a vehicle to explore my own educational practice – to develop my skills as a facilitator of what, in *Healing Journeys,* I call "transformational learning." I had been pushing the boundaries of my private consultancy practice – allowing myself to be more fully present with my clients, more spontaneous and creative in the moment, and more willing to trust their own wisdom and resourcefulness[26] - and I wanted to bring these aspects of my educational practice into my "mainstream" work in the police service. The article gives some indication of my struggle to do this – to lead the process of action inquiry "with authenticity, integrity and joy."

In terms of "second person inquiry" <which addresses "our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern, for example in the service of improving our personal and professional practice both individually and separately" (ibid.)> the article relates how I let go of my earlier intention to focus the project on the issues of men and masculinities in the police when preliminary discussions with

[26] E.g. in my work as a supervisor of professional coaches and mentors Mead, G., J. Campbell, et al. (1999). "Mentor and Athene: Supervising professional coaches and mentors." Career Development International 4(5): 283-290.

trusted colleagues confirmed my fears that it would have been a step too far. I was content therefore to invite people to take a much broader view of leadership so that, by the time the AIG was convened, our aim was to contribute to the quality of police leadership by inquiring into our own practice as leaders. We held this theme throughout the inquiry, both collectively and through our individual inquiry questions. Our claims to have improved our practice are rather glossed over in the article – though examined in more detail and corroborated by the independent evaluation of the AIG commissioned by the Home Office Policing and Crime Reduction Unit (Southgate 2001). Again, I shall return to this question shortly.

Lastly, in terms of "third person inquiry" <which, according to Reason and Bradbury (op.cit.), aims to "create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face (say in a large, geographically dispersed corporation), have an impersonal quality"> I was conscious that the very act of setting up a collaborative inquiry would challenge some of the organisational norms of male hegemony and hierarchical relationships. Whether we succeeded in making any long-term impression on these norms is open to question, but the amount of hostility and suspicion expressed towards the AIG generally (and to me in particular) by some quite senior and powerful non-participants testifies to how much our way of working and being together challenged "official" thinking.

Recently, I have found Stephen Kemmis's explication of Habermas's theory of communicative action (Kemmis 2000) extremely helpful in making sense of the personal-organisational dynamics at play in the AIG. He describes the "de-coupling" of the system and lifeworld under the economic and political conditions of modern society. Certainly the drive towards rational-purposive action is very strong in the police service and its logic of functional rationality is increasingly at odds with a less instrumental and more holistic sense of personal identity. As Kemmis says:

> Under the conditions of advanced differentiation characteristic of late modernity, whole realms of social life are co-ordinated in terms of purposive-rational action and functional reason, with the requirement for mutual understanding and consensus being more or less suspended. Under the imperatives of systems functioning, people

> simply 'get on with the job', as it were, without requiring a justification for what they are doing in terms of authentic personal assent (p96)
>
> [Such alienation can create] conditions of fear [which] do not readily favour creative approaches to organisational, personal, social and cultural development – the kind of playfulness that supports transformational work (p98)

For some people, deeply-ingrained in the logic of functional rationality, enterprises such as the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project are anathema to what they might see as a necessary split between the personal and the professional – the very split which our collaborative inquiry process sought to redress. The article describes some of the ways in which we have tried to bridge the gaps between the AIG and the wider police service and mentions a recent success in the introduction of similar groups into Cabinet Office's new Public Service Leadership Scheme. Of course, writing for the public domain and seeking to influence the development of leaders across the public sector are also forms of "third person inquiry."

Having explored questions of *purpose* (my intentions in convening the AIG) and *means* (what we actually did) we are left with the third, and most challenging, area: *outcomes.* Earlier, I identified three particular claims in the text of my published paper *Developing Ourselves as Police Leaders* (Mead 2001) about the outcomes of the AIG: that sharing our stories in the group was a powerful vehicle for deepening relationships and holding each other to account, that we created and took opportunities for transformational learning, and that the process had tangible benefits for both individuals and the organisation as a whole.

As I continue to grow and develop as a researcher, I realise how important it is to enhance the rigour of my scholarship of inquiry by grounding such assertions (to have exercised my educative influence with others) in data and supporting them with specific evidence. Let me therefore take these three claims in turn and critically examine the evidence.

Evidence of evaluating effectiveness in practice

In this section, I shall examine evidence for the claim in my paper that:

> We found that the simple act of sharing our stories, telling each other how we had been getting on with our inquiries, was enormously powerful - both to deepen the relationships between us and as a way of holding ourselves and each other to account.

On reading this paragraph in an early draft of the paper, my supervisor Jack Whitehead wrote:

> This seems to me to be a really important claim and one that we could all learn from. If you have any evidence to show anyone evaluating their effectiveness in practice, in relation to any of their values, do bring it along to share on Thursday.

I find this a very helpful way to frame the issue: can I substantiate my claim to have exercised my educative influence with others by presenting evidence of their embodied learning – stories of their practice changing over time – in their own voices, through dialogue or through their own reflections in words and images?

We tape-recorded many of the sessions of the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* inquiry group including a long session in January 2000 when eight of us met to review our learning during the inquiry (AIG). I mention this in the paper - each of us responded in turn to the question: *How has your practice as a leader changed and improved through the AIG process?* I think there is some evidence, in all of these interviews, of members of the group questioning and evaluating their effectiveness in practice. I'm not sure I would say that we were consciously evaluating our practice in terms of explicit values. Rather, the values tended to be implicit in terms of our inquiry questions and the leadership behaviours we aspired to.

Here is one such interview (I have altered the names to preserve confidentiality). John had been working on empowering his staff and had received feedback from his boss that they actually found him controlling and intimidating. He was shocked by this and determined to change his practice to be more in line with his implied values. Here

are some extracts from the transcript of an interview in which he talks about learning to behave differently towards his staff with pleasing results. The extracts are quite long because I want my analysis and interpretation to be open to question and isolated phrases taken out of context would not allow this.

John's emotional response to the events he describes may not be apparent in the transcript. His distress at discovering how his staff viewed his behaviour is very evident in his tone of voice on the tape-recording, as is his delight at finding a positive reaction to the way he decides to handle his relationship with his new office manager. Nowhere does he name his espoused values though it is clear that he believes it is important to empower his team and to value them as human beings. I think this is sufficient evidence to show him "evaluating his effectiveness in practice, in relation to his values".

My interpolated comments on the dialogue are shown thus: *[italics]*

John's new management style

John: I think, for me... I've got to talk about where I've realised I was at the beginning, and where I'm trying to be now. Because I haven't got to where I want to be, but I know what it's going to look like...

[Now John begins to describe his past controlling behaviour as a manager. By characterising it as "terrible" he is implicitly valuing a more empowering and humane approach]

You know, because I was actually acting as a buffer to all sorts of things, because my team were thinking they had to come through me first, rather than getting on and doing stuff. And because I was... I'm not very available, I'm all over the place. And they weren't doing things until they could come and ask me... ask permission... You know... it was like "Please sir, can I go to the toilet?" ... kind of thing... Which is terrible. And I hadn't realised how I'd got myself in that position. And I really had to work hard to get back. As I said, I had gone down a terribly long blind alley... that it's been quite a struggle to get back out of.

[Rose responds with a helpful, facilitative question – encouraging John to engage with his experience of behaving more congruently with his values]

Rose: So how have you changed?

[John responds with a specific example of "new" behaviour with results that seem to reinforce his desire to change – "I thought well right, okay, I'm doing the right thing here"]

John: By experimenting. I remember one bit where I made a conscious decision - I had a change of office manager, and my initial action I thought to do was... I sat in my office and I wrote "I'm going to get her in here, and I'm going to say – 'these are my expectations' blah blah blah blah blah". And then I suddenly thought "Well, hang on a minute! She applied for the job, and she wanted to do the job. And so she's probably got ideas of her own. And she doesn't need me to tell her what to do. Why don't I just see what happens. And if I need to do a little bit of nudging and steering, then fine, but.. let's see what happens". And in fact by letting that person set her own agenda, she actually then came to me two or three days later and said to me "I want to do this, this, this and this.. and I thought I'd better tell you first". And all of the things were things that... Two of the things were on my list, and two others were even better ideas than I'd got on my list. And I thought "Well, right, okay, I'm doing the right thing here". And in fact, she has really grown as a person, but it's helped me to grow as a leader by not trying to have her on a choke chain, which was what I was doing a lot.

[Rose asks a probing question, which elicits confirmation of the change]

Rose: So it's like a change of... a *complete* change of leadership style... would you say?

John: Yes. I've cut the chains a lot. I've had to really let go. Because I've been a very "on top" kind of leader in the past. But I think people have found me alright to work for because I'm a reasonably affable kind of person, but I'm sure that people I've worked with must have... I probably need to go back and ask sometime... But I've probably made sergeants feel very intimidated because I'm checking on them all the time, or asking them this, and asking them that, rather than letting them get on with things. And to actually let people go, has been really nice.

[Rose appears to reinforce John's pleasure in his more congruent changed behaviour]

Rose: That's good.

John: Because they are actually doing better than they would have done if they were coming through me.

Rose: That's a really positive experience then, isn't it?

John: Yes...

Transformational Learning

In this section, I shall examine evidence for the claim in my paper that:

> There is ample evidence in the transcripts of our meetings and in the accounts of our learning to substantiate the claim that, at the individual level, we created and took opportunities for transformational learning: learning that was grounded in our day-to-day practice as we variously engaged with the demands of delivering a high quality service in the complex environment of contemporary policing.

Again, I was challenged by Jack Whitehead who wrote:

> I'm wondering if you could trace the kind of dialogical learning, which seems to be implied by your term transformational learning. When I say "trace", I'm meaning both to describe and explain the "transformational learning."

This time I find it more helpful to stay with my own framing of transformational learning (rather than to respond to Jack's suggestion that the term implies a form of dialogical learning). I responded:

> I want to respond to your invitation but I'm not quite sure what you mean by dialogical learning so let me stay with my own term for the time being. I guess I am using the term to represent qualitative shifts in perception (and self-perception).

This qualitative shift has variously been labelled as *Learning III* (Bateson 1973) *Reframing* (Watzlawick, Weakland et al. 1974) *Triple Loop Learning* (Torbert 1991) and *Transcendent Learning* (Borredon 1998). However, the explanation I find most

useful (and which accords most fully with my own experience) is the *Gestalt* notion of the "aha" moment as an old gestalt (or pattern of understanding) dissolves and a new gestalt emerges from the dissolution. In the Gestalt model, letting go of old patterns of understanding is a pre-requisite to the emergence of new patterns - unlearning as well as learning.[27]

This unlearning, featured in the accounts of several members of the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* group (I characterise this elsewhere as "the dark night of the soul"). I think the quality of relationships we established in the group provided sufficient levels of trust, challenge, support and confidence for members to allow themselves to move into and through the void (i.e. being uncomfortable, inconsistent, out of control and "incompetent") so that some of these qualitative shifts occurred.

Let me give an example (at least what I think is an example) of such a moment of transformative learning, which one member of the inquiry reported at a group meeting last June (2000). I have changed her name to preserve confidentiality. As before – and for the same reasons – this is a lengthy extract of a transcript of tape-recorded dialogue. What the text cannot show is the delighted animation and sense of wonder on Jane's face as she told the group about this experience. Her realisation that she was no longer afraid seemed to have shifted a long-standing pattern, which had caused her distress and limited her effectiveness for many years.

My interpolated comments on the dialogue are shown thus: *[italics]*

Jane's revelation

Jane: I have had one interesting experience which I can only attribute to some of the learning on this course, and it was something that caught me completely out of the blue. Shall I go on or am I waffling on too much?

Geoff: I am fascinated.

[27] See *Healing Journeys* for a fuller exploration of "transformational learning"

Jane: OK. Well... one Friday afternoon when I was visiting at XXXXXX (police station) and I saw a sergeant and just said "How are things going?" and it was sort of "Don't speak to me, I am so cross," and this chap was beside himself and he was really irate. He was clutching in his hand a memo I had written in which I had deliberately tried to be non-judgemental... but he had got the wrong end of the stick and convinced himself that one sentence had implied some sort of criticism, and he was in a dreadful state. He was a great big fellow, he couldn't stay still, he had sweat dripping off him, you know, I really thought he was going to have a heart attack. He was really just beyond himself.

[Now Jane identifies a qualitative shift in her self-perception when she realises that she is not frightened – an " aha" moment I am claiming to be an example of transformational learning]

And I was just saying to him "You know, actually I think you have got this wrong." Suddenly this little thought just bubbled in my brain and it said, "You are not frightened."

[Later she reflects on her experience of the incident, describing her learning as a kind of "revelation"]

And afterwards I was thinking, you know, as you do when you have gone through this sort of learning experience, "You know, there is something in that, I ought to think about that some more." And in a way it was a kind of a - it was a revelation - and I don't know whether it's partly life experiences or what have you, but perhaps I realise why some of the communication problems I have had in the past, when dealing with, particularly groups of sergeants and front line police officers, has actually been rooted in a fear, that they are actually intimidating and powerful and you feel vulnerable and you know...

[Although Jane is reticent about the details, she goes on to describe a period in which she appears to have made some connections between the immediate experience of not being afraid and other aspects of her life in what she calls kaleidoscopic" glimmers of enlightenment"]

There are all sorts of ideas that came out of this... it was a couple of hours afterwards and I had an opportunity to sort of just really collapse, relax and I was trying to just unwind, all these things were sort of churning up in my brain and I was getting like all these little glimmers of enlightenment, and in the end I decided that actually I had got to put a stop to this because it was as if it was just too much. It was like a whole kaleidoscope that kept sort of working round my brain and every now and then it would freeze and you would think, "Oh, is that what that meant." You know? Really strange experience, but its one I'll never forget. It left me feeling

sort of, quite – "Oh I don't know how much more of all this enlightenment I can take, in one fell swoop." Really strange, it all seemed to come at once like that.

[In her final reflection, Jane appears to be rather unsettled by the strangeness of her experience. Her transformational learning – if that is indeed what it is – was clearly not easy or comfortable]

Individual and organisational benefits

In this section, I shall examine evidence for the claim in my paper that:

> From the organisation's point of view, the most immediate benefits of the inquiry are to be found in the improved leadership practices of its members though, of course, there are so many variables in human behaviour that, whilst one can ascribe these benefits to the AIG, one cannot "prove" the connection.

I am careful not to claim that there were benefits in terms of improved policing. There may have been but policing is such a complex affair, with so many extraneous influences that I cannot identify any such effects with confidence. The question is therefore, what evidence do I have that my educative influence brought any benefits to individuals or to the organisation as a whole?

I want to adduce two distinctly different forms of evidence to address this question: a personal and very subjective account of one person's journey through the AIG (which focuses on individual benefits) and an independent evaluation of the impact of the scheme by a Home Office researcher (which attempts to gauge its impact on the organisation).

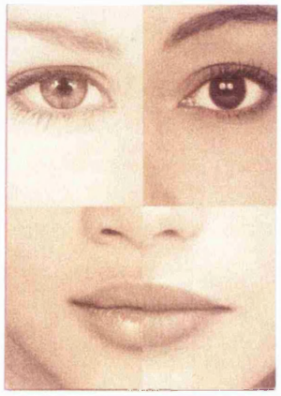
At the same meeting at which the dialogue between John and Rose was recorded, we also used words and images to make a creative representation in response to the question: *What has the story of the AIG looked like to me?* I was delighted that this exercise was introduced and facilitated by another member of the group and that everyone – including me – engaged with it so readily and with so much imagination and openness. One member of the group, let us call her Flora, used a selection of postcards to make a book of her journey.

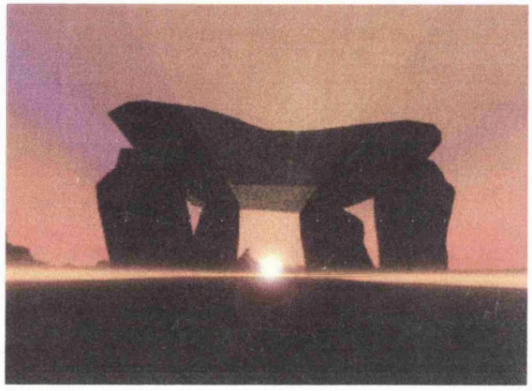
I think you will agree that the images she uses illustrate her story with wonderful clarity and power. They testify to the benefits of her educational experience and, to the extent that I enabled that to happen, also to my educative influence. Flora's text (words and images) clearly identifies the benefits she believes she got from being a member of the AIG: *"I've come to accept that it's OK to be all these people", "it's made me look at me", "now it [my confidence] is this big", she has come through a "dark tunnel", "now I have really got some sense of direction", she is "happy to walk in there [at work] and get stuck in".*

Of course, these perceptions are self-reported and their significance can be questioned though her growing self-confidence is evident in the video-recording of her presentation of her "journey" to the rest of the group. Shortly afterwards she also successfully applied for promotion to a more senior grade. By convening the AIG and facilitating the group over eighteen months in ways that supported Flora as she educated herself, I think that I can claim to have influenced her learning for good. All I did was to help her unlatch the gate. Her presentation is reproduced here verbatim, transcribed from the videotape and her original handmade book.

Flora's journey through the AIG

Flora: What I have done is to make a book... and I am here in the book... this is me when we started [face], how I felt... lots of different people... Now I have come to accept that it's OK to be all these people... that is what you have to be. The next meeting we had, I chose this postcard [Stonehenge]... that image represents a journey. I was heading towards that light behind the stones...





Then I looked at the paper I wrote in September... it was all about me. This inquiry has made me look at me a lot more (which I did not used to be particularly good at doing). I was far too modest. I did not like looking at me... finding the faults or whatever... or even the good bits... So, it's made me look at me...

This is where my confidence used to be... you can see it is very small at the bottom of the page... And this is where my confidence has got to on this journey – now it is this big [large multi-coloured letters filling the page]... with a little figure saying, "You can do it!"... Which is me telling myself, and the support I receive from the group.

These ones were when I did not know where I was going and did not feel too good about myself... This one [headless man] represents the dark tunnel I was in. I could not see any light. Later, I wrote in my notebook "If only you had looked harder"... because the next one [seated woman] is how I felt at the time, but you can actually see the light coming in the doorway if you look up... If ever it happens to me again, I must remember to look harder for that light.

> Now I have really got some sense of direction as you can see in this picture [phone box]... and so to the final page. I found this picture [woman wading] in a gallery on holiday... actually I saw the original oil painting... I could have looked at it all day... If I had won the lottery I would have gone back to buy it because I like it so much. This is how I feel at work at the moment... It is an enormous thing but I am happy to walk in there and get "stuck in".
>
> I have done a book because I love books. I decided to buy and read more books this year... and then there is my notebook I started which is really important to me. Now I would like to read you "The Path Less Travelled" by Robert Frost because that is how I have lived my life and as part of leadership that is actually what you have to do...

As a group, one of our concerns was how to communicate the organisational benefits of what we were learning with our colleagues in the Constabulary and with the wider police service. As I described in the article, we were rather nervous about exposing ourselves in this way and thought carefully about how we might safely "bridge the gaps" between our lived experience of the AIG (our "life-world") and the harder-edged culture of the organisation (the "system-world"). We acknowledged that what we had learned about ourselves and the ways in which we had improved our individual leadership practice was highly situated and particular to each one of us. We did not seek to present any generalisable propositions about "good leadership", preferring instead to offer our embodied knowing (in the form of our day-to-day practice) for scrutiny.

After our first attempt to communicate in this way, at the ACPO Research Conference in May 2000, we realised that we needed to take another tack to overcome colleagues' scepticism. With the agreement of all members of the AIG, I approached the Home Office Research Unit and asked if they would undertake an independent evaluation of the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project. It took six months but they did eventually appoint Peter Southgate, an independent researcher, to conduct a full evaluation. He began, in December 2000, by interviewing me and taking copies of papers and transcripts of our meetings – from which he extracted our specific claims under three headings: *Shifts in self-perception, Behavioural changes,* and *Tangible benefits for the organisation.*

He then tested these claims by interviewing all the members of the AIG (including several who "dropped out" for various reasons) followed by a selection of their peers, line-managers and staff (looking for confirmation or disconfirmation of our accounts). After several weeks he presented a draft report to members of the AIG to critique, taking note of our comments and feedback in his final report (Southgate 2001). I think the 15,000 word report presents a fair picture of the life of the AIG and of its impact on the organisation. It has the merit of being compiled independently though it is not without its biases - for example, despite our explicit disavowal of lexical definitions of leadership, the researcher comments:

> The AIG members had not really thought too much about what leadership meant until they got involved in the group. In fact, they had few straightforward definitions of leadership to offer, either before or after the AIG experience.

Importantly, the report tests our claims from a third-party perspective – and generally endorses the value of further exploring the potential of such collaborative forms of leadership development. I want to include some extracts here as further evidence of my educative influence – and of its limitations. I shall focus on what the report has to say about what members of the AIG gained from the experience and what benefits it had for the organisation. These verbatim extracts have been edited for the sake of brevity.

Developing ourselves as leaders: a report on an action inquiry group

Home Office Policing and Reducing Crime Unit
Peter Southgate
February 2001

What did the members gain from the experience?

Three areas of change were identified by the group: self-perceptions, behaviour changes and tangible benefits to the organisation, all of which overlap to a fair extent. The following three sections combine statements recorded at the time with statements made in the recent interviews about how participants experienced the AIG and how their managers or staff saw them change.

(i) Shifts in self-perception

- I now feel I have the 'right to be there' when representing the force at events.
- I have a better understanding of my strengths and needs and those of others.
- I am able to be more detached – a more balanced attitude to life and work.
- I realised that I am the same person at home and at work.
- I feel less stressed, even though I have a greater workload.
- I recognise when I am slipping back and stop myself.
- I feel good about myself. I don't feel I'm letting anyone down.
- It reaffirmed my confidence in my own competence
- It was OK to be me and allow myself to 'shine'.
- I tell myself 'I can do it' instead of 'I can't do it'.

(ii) Behavioural changes

- I am more self-confident in delivering presentations to groups.
- I put more effort into 'working behind the scenes'.
- I am more adventurous, more analytical and challenging.
- I am more confident and relaxed when communicating with others.
- People feel my mind is on them more now when we're talking.
- I have improved my time management and increased my workload.
- I start and end each day by walking through the office talking to people.
- Rather than try to provide all the answers I now just look for the questions.
- I try to pass confidence on to others by recognising small achievements.
- I no longer just say what I think without worrying about the consequences.

(iii) Tangible benefits for the organisation

The kinds of benefits which members experienced were not likely to be ones producing very immediate or obvious results of the kind which others could very easily 'see'. But the various comments showed some very important benefits for the organisation: it now has some people working for it who have an increased enthusiasm, vision and strategic view of the job.

Was the AIG of benefit to its members?

Some said they described the AIG to their colleagues as a course, though it was not this in the conventional sense. It was really a 'learning experience', a 'journey', a 'very personal development'. Although it was not therapy in the normal sense, some did use this word about it; and it was certainly felt to be a life-enhancing and regenerating experience. In more traditional training terms it was about: understanding leadership skills; relationships with staff and colleagues; how managers behave; building teams; and getting co-operation from others.

In general, the benefit which all claimed to have experienced was that they had learned how to reflect more upon what they were doing, in their work and their lives. This reflection had led them to take a clearer, more strategic, view of what was needed in their work, and they had become more calm and better organised in often stressful situations.

Was the AIG of benefit to the organisation?

The AIG was not intended to teach people specific skills or pieces of information, so there are no simple 'learning objectives' which can be used to define criteria for measuring its success. The benefits for the organisation cannot be quantified in terms of staff 'qualifications' in this way, but must be seen in terms of having more confident, clearly focussed and strategically thinking employees. Most of the AIG members claimed that this is what they were as a result, and there were managers who were ready to endorse this view by commending their staff for good performance. Some of the AIG members had started to take small initiatives themselves to try and improve working and practices and relationships in their part of the force, so these too can be seen as tangible benefits of the experience. Steps were also being taken to use some of the elements of the process in future management development training programmes.

Beyond this, it is not easy to identify 'tangible' benefits, because the AIG was not really designed to produce them, certainly not in the short term. The evidence of its impact is that some managers and staff have seen an increase in qualities such as enthusiasm, calmness under pressure and strategic vision on the part of people who were in the AIG. But against this there are the views of those who saw no differences or benefits.

Conclusion

Overall, the various comments made by the group members about the meaning of leadership suggest some fairly positive and significant changes being brought about by participation in the

AIG. It could be unwise to draw conclusions from this particular study about the relevance of an AIG in other contexts but, on the basis of the positive reactions to this particular exercise, it seems that further explorations of its potential would be justifiable.

The report is a pragmatic rather than a scholarly document, which summarises the anonymous views of members of the AIG and some of our peers and line-managers. It thus broadens the base upon which our claims are grounded without offering much direct or specific evidence of particular individual or organisational benefits. Of course, I am pleased that it lends some weight to our claims to have improved our leadership practices *[for example "some managers and staff have seen an increase in qualities such as enthusiasm, calmness under pressure and strategic vision"]* and I hope that we can find ways to use its findings to encourage wider use of such collaborative ways of working.

But what strikes me most forcefully is just how dull and flat the language of the report is. What it presents is abstract and removed from the excitement and passion of our experience in the group. I find personal stories, such as the one Flora tells through her use of images, so much more evocative and convincing but, as we discovered at the ACPO Conference it seems that these are liable to be discounted by the rational-purposive logic of the "system-world".

A path with heart

There are many more stories to be told about the AIG but I think that I have shared enough travellers' tales from these explorations of my professional knowledge landscape to show how my educational practice has developed over the past decade or so. I want to reflect on these experiences, to see what patterns and themes there may be and what they might have to say about my embodied values – the living standards of judgement and practice that constitute what Jack Whitehead would call my "living theory of education".

For several hours, preparing to write this section, I have been asking myself two questions in relation to my practice as an educator over this period (say 1988-2001): What has changed? What has stayed the same? And, as I re-read this chapter and

ponder, the answer seems quite clear. By and large, my core beliefs about people, educational processes and the educative relationship have remained constant, whilst there have been marked differences in the way I have tried to put them into practice as an educator. Let me try to articulate these core beliefs, what Donald Schon (Schon 1983) might call my *espoused values,* beginning with people.

Transactional Analysis proposes four basic existential positions between "I" and "other." The first three: I'm not OK – You're OK, I'm OK – You're not OK, I'm not OK – You're not OK, are unconscious choices, having been made early in life, whereas the fourth: I'm OK –You're OK, is a conscious adult decision. As Thomas Harris puts it: "The first three positions are based on feelings. The fourth is based on thought, faith and the wager of action" (Harris 1967). Attempting to live in accordance with this belief calls upon me to respect my own person and that of others. It comes out in a strong sense of fair play and desire for justice, which undoubtedly contributed to my decision to become a police officer. I suspect that it grew out of my childhood experience of being bullied at school and my rage at such a violation.

Alongside this "ethic of rights" I think I also developed, at an early age, an equally strong "ethic of care". Carol Gilligan (Gilligan 1993) uses these two terms to contrast parallel stages of psychological development in men and women. However the death of my father, when I was four, produced in me the desire to protect others from harm. As an adult, this has developed into a profound sense of duty and service – often to the point of putting others first. I believe it was this "ethic of care" that lead me to stay, perhaps too long, in an increasingly unhappy marriage. Now I am aware that I must temper caring for others with the need to care for myself.

A third core belief about people is that each of us has a basic right to self-determination: that within the bounds of not causing undue harm to others, we are each entitled and capable of determining who we are and how we want to live our lives. At a minimum this demands tolerance of others and, at its best, a celebration of the glorious differences and diversity of humanity. There is no place (at least in my *espoused values*) for racism, ageism, or sexism. I demand the right to be me and I honour your right to be you. As a corollary, I believe that each person, through self-awareness, is capable of choice and is therefore responsible for their own behaviour.

As an educator, I have a passion for learning and a belief that it behoves me to inquire deeply into my own life and practice as I offer myself as a resource to help others learn too. My purpose in life is to "unlatch the gate" – as I wrote earlier, I serve the kind of learning that is life-enhancing, increases our possibilities for being and doing in the world and leads to a fuller expression of loving relationships. It follows that making an artificial distinction between personal and professional aspects of our lives is unhelpful and, so far as people are able and willing, I believe that educational processes should enable us to integrate these two dimensions in pursuit of a satisfying and worthwhile life.

Another educational value is to acknowledge the primacy of our own experience, the power of our imagination, our ability to make meaning, and the importance of our practical knowledge (know how). John Heron (Heron 1989; Heron 1992) has called this "manifold learning" - a term which I would like to adopt as indicative of our unique and multiple epistemologies. It seems to me crucial to work across all four domains – perhaps even to emphasise those that are commonly neglected or under-valued. In many organisations, including the police, scant regard is given to people's creative capacities and I believe that it is vital for both the effectiveness of organisations and the well being of individuals that this imbalance is remedied.

Finally, I come to my beliefs about the nature of a healthy educative relationship. Jack Whitehead and I agree that "to educate" is a reflexive rather than a transitive verb. We can exercise educative influence with others but, ultimately, we can only educate ourselves. Many years ago, I found inspiration in Carl Rogers' famous book *Freedom to Learn* (Rogers 1983). In his essay on *The Interpersonal Relationship in the Facilitation of Learning*, he proposes three essential facets of an educative relationship:

> First of all is a transparent realness in the facilitator, a willingness to be a person, to be and live the feelings and thoughts of the moment. When this realness includes a prizing, a caring, a trust and respect for the learner, the climate for learning is enhanced. When it includes a sensitive and accurate empathic listening, then indeed a freeing climate, stimulative of self-initiated learning and growth, exists. (Ibid. p133)

These three elements: authentic presence, positive regard for the other and an empathetic quality of attention are touchstones for the kind of educative relationships I want to establish. Rogers has encapsulated quite beautifully something of how I need to be in order to embody my core belief "I'm OK – You're OK" in my educational practice. Martin Buber too, touches the essence of this quality in his notion of the "I-You" relationship, in which both "I" and "other" are fully and mutually present (Buber 1970) and in his description of the:

> ... special humility of the educator for whom the life and particular being of all his [sic] pupils is the decisive factor to which his 'hierarchic' recognition is subordinated" (Buber 1947).

I tried to articulate a similar view of an ideal educative relationship, using my own words, when framing my inquiry question as part of the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project: "How can I lead [i.e. exercise educative influence] in this process of Action Inquiry with authenticity, integrity and joy?"

But the acid test – where my "living theory of education" becomes apparent – is in my educational practice, what Donald Schon (Schon 1983) might call my *values-in-action.* For the most part, I am content to let my narratives of the three police educational programmes speak for themselves. However, I do think that there is an underlying pattern that is worthy of note.

Contrasting the Special Course/APC with the MDP, I notice a change in my language from tutor/student to facilitator/participant, which, I believe, mirrors a deeper shift in my practice. With the Special Course/APC, although we spoke much about *student-centred learning*, and we did indeed work in ways that were much more respectful of course members than had been the case in my time as a member of the Special Course, we still kept a pretty firm hold on both the content and process of the course. We recognised, even celebrated, individual difference but when push came to shove, we – the staff – were definitely in charge.

The MDP was conceived as a contribution to achieving *a learning organisation.* Although designing and managing the process, I had a much greater sense of relaxing my hold on the content of the programme. Participants determined their own objectives, wrote their own action plans and were encouraged to be creative in looking for opportunities to develop through their day-to-day work. No one assessed their learning at any stage – they were responsible for judging whether or not they had met their own needs. Using the language of Transactional Analysis (Berne 1964), I would say that my educational practice had moved from a Parent-Child relationship to something closer to (but not yet fully) an Adult-Adult relationship.

Although I convened and proposed the initial inquiry question for the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project, both content and process were designed and facilitated collaboratively. My language has shifted again to that of co-participant/co-inquirer. I inquired actively into my educative practice just as my colleagues inquired into their leadership practice. We helped each other learn by exercising our educative influence with each other. We framed our own inquiry questions, decided our own goals, took personal responsibility for how far (and in what way) we pursued them, supported and challenged each other, and determined our own standards of practice. I would describe us as *a community of inquiry* and I think it is fair to say that we generally operated in the mode of an Adult-Adult relationship.

The three programmes represent a gradual move towards the embodiment of my core beliefs and values in my educational practice. I cannot pretend that I always manage to enact them fully – I would be a secular saint if I did. Too often I find myself silently judging others, impatient that they do not see the world my way, or full of self-doubt and fear that I have nothing to offer. But these voices are transitory, I know them for what they are, I can let go of them, remembering that my existential position towards others, I'm OK – You're OK, is enacted moment by moment through mindful choices.

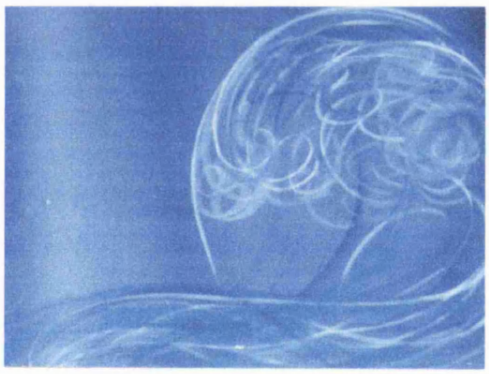
I could go on to analyse my practice in each of these programmes more systematically but, as so often, I think that metaphor and image will convey my meanings more evocatively. With that in mind, I want to close this chapter with my reflection on what the story of the AIG looked like to me – recorded in words and pictures at the same

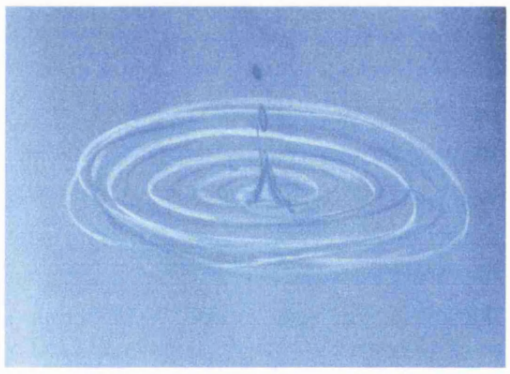
time as Flora made and presented her book of postcard-images to the group. My pictures were drawn with pastels on coloured paper and the words are taken from a transcript of the session.

What did the story of the AIG look like to me?

Geoff: These are all images of water. When we sat down to talk about this, images of water kept coming into my mind so I decided to go along with them and see what they are about. This journey has not been a smooth one for me, not like climbing a ladder rung by rung but more sinking and swimming, going round in waves. Waves were the first thing that came into my mind – quite dramatic and powerful.

I have felt a real shift in this experience. I was saying to Judy that, when we started, I felt as though I was the container – that if this process for us was about sharing anything, I assumed that I had to hold it. What has happened to me over the last year is that I have realised that it is much, much bigger than I am. I don't feel like a container, I feel much more part of something, swept along by something. So all sorts of images of water came to mind.

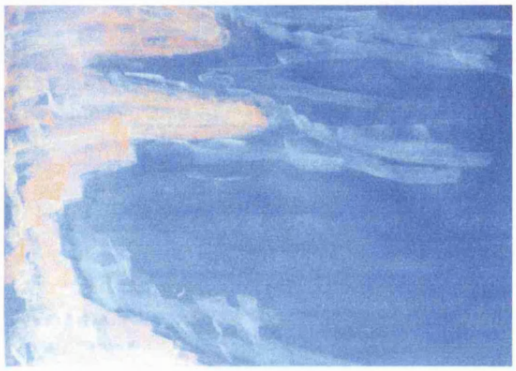


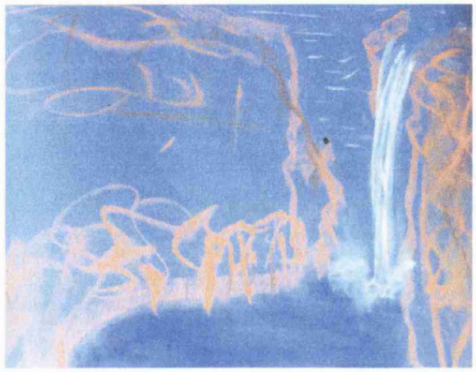


For me this group has sometimes been quite dramatic – a sudden surge of something. At other times, it is quiet. There has been a kind of rhythm to it, an ebb and flow which I would love to understand more about... love to understand more about my part in it and how I contribute to the process.

The second image is this single drop which ripples out. Sometimes the learning has come from something comparatively simple, just dropped into the pool... like when you, Judy, said about me playing small and wanting me to be more present... it was a pebble dropped into my

pool. It wasn't huge or dramatic at the time but its influence rippled out, and out, and out. Again, Dawn, your feedback on my paper was something that has stayed with me...





My third image is of a seashore. My sense of this picture is that the tide is on the turn. Now I am being swept along by the tide. I don't have to carry water uphill, in a bucket (which is more how I felt originally). It feels expansive... and scary (because I don't know where the tide is going - I can't control it like I can the contents of a bucket of water). I also thought about an image of me walking along the shoreline. Sometimes I like to detach myself and look at what is going on... and that is part of my learning too... that I need to do that... to imagine myself out of the flow.

Finally... this picture of a waterfall. What was in my mind here was that water follows its own course. No matter how you try to channel water, it finds the places it wants to go and the wise person works with that not against it. You can stick a mountain in the way but, eventually, if the water wants to go that way it will cut through. Part of my learning as an educator (which is how I increasingly see myself) is about recognising and respecting where the energy (of that water) wants to go, and going with that. I would rather swim in a river than a canal because the river is where it wants to be, it has not been put there. That is what I feel about this group too.

Commentary

In this commentary on *Reshaping my Professional Identity*, I focus on the last three of the twelve distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity described in *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*, exemplifying their embodiment in, and emergence from, my practice of *living inquiry*. I have chosen Duration, Passion and Reason, and Critical Judgement as particularly, though not exclusively, relevant to this chapter and I invite you to bear them in mind throughout your reading of the thesis.

Duration: If *living inquiry* is a lifelong practice, then it follows that worthwhile inquiries take time. Of course, individual elements can be quite brief, but substantial questions such as those posed in *Interlude IV: The point of no return* – How can I live well as a man in the world? How can I enter more fully into loving relationships? How can I find healing for body and soul? How can I exercise my (educative) influence for good? – have demanded my energy and attention for many years. Indeed, even after fifteen years or so of conscious inquiry, these questions are still significant issues for me.

I have located this commentary here because *Reshaping my Professional Identity* clearly shows how my practice as an educator has developed since 1986. In this chapter I explore the purposes, means and outcomes of three innovative educational programmes that I designed and delivered in the police service, in relation to my core beliefs about people, educational processes and the educative relationship. Gradually, during this time, the centre of gravity of my professional identity has shifted from police office to educator. I think you will agree that, by "living the question" over many years, I have improved my practice in the sense that it is now more congruent with my educational values.

Passion and Reason: In *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* I made the simple point that my *living inquiry* flourishes when open both to the zest of my passion and the guiding hand of reason and I shared a favourite quotation from Khalil Gibran[28]:

[28] Gibran, K. (1926). The Prophet. New York, Alfred A Knopf.

> Your reason and your passion are the rudder and sails of your seafaring soul. If either your sails or rudder be broken, you can but drift, or else be held at standstill in mid-seas

This text is fuelled by passion, for inquiry, for writing, for masculinity, for loving relationships, for healing and for education but it is also guided by reason and careful consideration of form and content. In this chapter, in the section entitled *A passion for police education*, I explore my practice as an educator over a decade. I think you will recognise the passion that drove me to create and institute three major educational programmes: the Accelerated Promotion Course (APC), the Management Development Programme (MDP), and the Action Inquiry Group (AIG). I think you will also see, in the narrative, the careful thought that went into their design and delivery.

The balance between passion and reason is also apparent in *Healing Journeys*, for example in my reflections on the storytelling workshop in the section entitled *Inquiring into my practice.* It is perhaps less obvious in *The Men's Room* and *Postcards from the Edge* where the inquiries follow a more intuitive course.

Critical Judgement: This series of commentaries began by looking at Experiential Grounding as the basis of all that followed and it seems fitting to conclude this aesthetic appreciation of my life of inquiry with Critical Judgement. In *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* I point out that the application of critical judgement is implicit in the "conscious structuring" of the text and embodied in the choices I have made in the course of my inquiries. However, as I focus on how best to communicate my learning, I realise that it is important to draw attention to the explicit use of my critical judgement too. Let me point to three particular examples.

First, in this chapter, in the section entitled *A path with heart,* I think you will see how I have used my critical judgement to review the three educational programmes I designed and delivered for the police service in terms of my educational values (i.e. my core beliefs about people, education and the educative relationship). This enables me to recognise a gradual shift towards the greater embodiment of my educational values in my practice, which I typify as moving from *student-centred learning* (still

essentially hierarchical) to *a community of inquiry* (with genuine mutuality of learning amongst peers).

Second, in this chapter in the section entitled *A passion for police education: Action Inquiry Group,* I use my critical judgement to enhance the rigour of my scholarship of inquiry by critically re-examining a published paper (Mead 2001) and adducing documentary evidence in support of particular claims about the outcomes of the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* action inquiry project.

Third, this series of commentaries itself is a conscious and explicit application of my critical judgement. As I point to the text to clarify the meanings of my distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity as they are embodied in, and emerge from my practice, I am offering both an aesthetic appreciation of my life of inquiry and a critical assessment of my own thesis.

Interlude V

Turning for home

Saturday 5th May 2001

It is May Bank Holiday weekend and, for the first time this year, I am sitting at the dining room table in my flat with the French windows wide open: fresh air, blue skies and the sound of birdsong. I finished *Reshaping my Professional Identity* about ten days ago and I am preparing to write about my inquiry practice – what I have come to call *Living Inquiry.* My journey is not yet over (perhaps the most difficult part is yet to come) but I do have a sense of turning for home. "Turning" because I know that I need to shift the emphasis from telling the stories of my inquiries to a more critical scrutiny or (as I put it in the *Prelude*) "a deeper level of reflection and theorising to position the research conceptually and in relation to the literature."

Throughout the thesis I have sought to bring mythos and logos together, to exercise both my originality of mind and my critical judgement. At our most recent supervision session[1], Jack Whitehead, having read *Reshaping my professional identity,* draws a clear distinction between these two activities.

> The feeling I have with the way in which you are synthesising your journey and giving it a form is meeting my understanding of originality of mind... What I am really looking forward to talking to you about is what constitutes, from your perspective now, having exercised your originality of mind, an appropriate way of engaging with a sense of critical judgement.
>
> I thought we might have some helpful conversations about, literally, how one can engage in understanding, expressing, defining and communicating the very standards of judgement that you might use in a critical evaluation of your own self-study. And that would then satisfy both of the criteria of originality of mind and critical judgement.

[1] Supervision - 29th April 2001

For me, the distinction is not quite so clear cut. Creative intuition and conscious structuring are not mutually exclusive activities. Rather, as Nobel Laureate Peter Medawar argues in his classic text on *Induction and Intuition in Scientific Thought,* (Medawar 1968) though discovery and justification are "two separate and dissociable episodes of thought" (Ibid p51) it is the intimate relationship and interplay between them that lies at the heart of scientific practice. "Imaginativenss and a critical temper are both necessary at all times, but neither is sufficient." (Ibid p58)

Nevertheless, my energy and interest are moving in the direction of understanding and articulating my inquiry practice. If the over-arching question that this text seeks to answer is: What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry? then how has this been reflected in my life as inquiry and what contribution can I legitimately claim to be making towards a scholarship of inquiry? These are questions I now feel ready to address but which would have been empty and meaningless in the absence of the stories of my inquiries into my life as a man, of my struggle to find happiness and fulfilment in loving relationships, of my search for healing, and of the shift in my professional identity away from mainstream policing towards an educative role.

They are questions too that may lead me to a better sense of the significance of my work, something that Jack Whitehead generously encourages me to acknowledge in terms of the integration of ontological and epistemological values in self-study. In the following exchange[2] I respond quite emotionally to Jack's suggestion that I am making a substantial contribution to self-study action research:

> Jack: So... life as inquiry but you are actually putting it forward now as a knowledge claim and making original contributions to our understanding of the nature of appropriate standards of practice and judgement for self-study inquiry. It's superb – you've linked the personal with the professional in the course of your life as inquiry. It is a remarkable piece of work.
>
> Geoff: I feel very moved by that Jack... long silence... chuckle... Well I haven't held back – that much I do know... laughter... When you say it like that it sounds a much bigger thing than I sense it to have been. You're giving it a value and importance that

[2] Supervision - 29th April 2001

> I don't necessarily find it easy to claim. I tend to think that it's only me writing about stuff that I do...

I ask Jack to suggest some papers that might help me understand where my contributions fit in relation to the leading edge of self-study and he directs me to several sources; Elliot Eisner's two keynote addresses to the American Education Research Association on *Alternative forms of representation* (Eisner 1993; Eisner 1997), Claudia Mitchell and Sandra Weber's recent work on *Theorizing Nostalgia in Self-Study* (Mitchell and Weber 1999), Mary Lynn Hamilton and Stefinee Pinnegar's chapter on *The Value and Promise of Self-study* (Hamilton and Pinnegar 1998), Carl Leggo's poetic and lyrical address on *Living the Research in Everyday Practice* to the 2001 I.C.T.R. Conference (Leggo 2001), and to the epilogue of Terri Austin's PhD Thesis *Treasures in the Snow: What do I know and how do I know it through my educational inquiry into my practice of community? (Austin 2001)* in which, in her capacity as Chair of the Self-Study for Teacher Education Practices AERA Special Interest Group, she writes to the Education Subject Area Panel of the UK Economic and Social Science Research Council, about the potential contribution of self-study action research.

I read the papers and notice, as I do so, that I am beginning to feel some pressure to situate my work within the framework of self-study in teacher education. The pressure is coming from within (I certainly don't think this was Jack's intention) and I shall resist it – just as I shall resist the temptation to define my inquiries in terms of any other single model. I associate this pressure to conform to such a narrow approach with what Michael Polanyi once called "the crippling mutilations imposed by an objectivist framework" (Polanyi 1958). Instead, I know that to satisfy my determination to inquire throughout the process of writing the thesis, my PhD must set, justify and assess itself against its own original criteria as well as acknowledging and drawing upon the ideas of others. This is my task and, having drawn breath, I am ready to continue the journey.

At this point, my original text moved on to the material that now constitutes *Chapter One: Living Inquiry.* As outlined in the *Introduction*, I have reordered this material to "fold the text back on itself" and to critically evaluate my narratives of inquiry in terms of my own distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity. I hope that, having now read the four narrative chapters, you might want to reread *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* with a richer, deeper understanding of how it relates to the underlying and interrelated strands of inquiry before moving on to *Chapter Six: Living Inquiry (Reprise).*

Chapter Six

Living Inquiry (Reprise)

As I come towards the end of this thesis, I am conscious that although I have critically evaluated the narratives of my inquiries in terms of my own distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity, I have yet to answer the imagined questions Jack Whitehead, Peter Reason and Judi Marshall, my tutors at CARPP asked about *living inquiry* in the opening chapter.[1]

They are challenging questions, which stimulated my thinking and lead me to develop my own standards of judgement and criteria of validity for the thesis. I promised to return to their questions so let me now respond, speaking directly to each of them in a "virtual dialogue."

Dialogues with my tutors

Peter first: your question was "How do you determine and define rigour and discipline?" And I respond: the rigour and discipline in my *living inquiry* come primarily from aspiring to attain the twelve attributes that underpin my own standards of judgement and practice. There are times too when I assess aspects of my work against other criteria – your own, for example, developed with Hilary Bradbury in the closing chapter of the *Handbook of Action Research* (Reason and Bradbury 2000).

Thus I might want to claim that the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project, as a form of co-operative inquiry, fits your five categories of questions for validity and quality in inquiry; questions of participative-relational practices, practical outcomes, extended epistemologies, worthwhileness and the developmental quality of the work, but that is secondary to striving to meet the standards I set for my inquiry as a work of art.

In judging this thesis as a communicative act, I find it helpful to refer to Habermas's four criteria of communicative validity; comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness and

[1] See – *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*

"rightness" (Habermas 1976) but, again, this is not my primary concern. I think of the reader and wonder about its evocative quality. Does it "call out of you" some of your own self-stories; does it in any way help you to unlatch the gate of your own "will to meaning"? Can you see the creation of my embodied knowledge in my narratives of inquiry and practice? Is the text interesting and easy to read? Do you think I write well? Your answers to these questions give me a much better sense of the quality of my communication than the application of some abstract principles because they come directly out of our relationship as you read and interact with the stories of my *living inquiry.*

Judi next: you queried "Can you articulate the qualities and practices of your inquiry process?" And I respond: I think my work is probably closest, in its intention and scope, to your own – particularly in the last few years as you have written about living your life as inquiry (Marshall 1999; Marshall 2000). I greatly admire the finely grained texture of your "attentional disciplines" and have often felt that my own efforts were somewhat clumsy in comparison.

I consciously put your work to one side as I strove to understand and develop my own forms of *living inquiry*, concerned that I might find it difficult to avoid defining my work in your terms. This is not to suggest that would be your intention. Indeed, I take heart from your explicit encouragement to the contrary (Marshall 2000):

> Each person's inquiry approach will be distinctive, disciplines cannot be cloned or copied. Rather, each person must identify and craft their own qualities and practices. The questioning then becomes how to do them well, how to conduct them with quality and rigour appropriate to their forms and how to articulate the inquiry processes and sense-making richly and non-defensively (p433)

Now that I am more confident in the qualities and practices of my inquiry processes I have returned to your writing with a new sense of standing alongside you, exploring this field as a fellow researcher, recognising and enjoying similarities and differences in our perspectives. We are both interested and concerned about gender, you from a woman's standpoint, me as a man. We both pay attention to what you call "inner and

outer arcs of inquiry". We have both transcended conventional boundaries between personal and professional domains of inquiry and we both wrestle with where to set the boundary between public and private. We are both exploring what it means to live our lives as inquiry and how that qualifies as "research".

So, I guess my direct response to the question I put in your mouth Judi, is that I have articulated the qualities and practices of my inquiry processes to the best of my ability and understanding at this time. I would be very interested to hear what you think of my attempts and to discuss ways in which I might craft them more finely.

Jack, you asked: "What are the values that underpin your living inquiry?" And I reply: I like your definition of values as those human goals for the sake of which we do things and I admire the clarity with which you are able to articulate your values as your living standards of judgement and practice. You have often encouraged me to explicate my *living inquiry* in terms of my own values and I continue to struggle with this. I don't think that I can account for my *living inquiry* in terms of a few overarching value statements, though I do find it helpful to elucidate some "core beliefs" about people, education and the educative relationship when considering my educational practices in *Reshaping my Professional Identity.*

For some reason I am reluctant to claim "big" social values such as academic freedom or the sanctity of the person. I do not decry them and I know that for you and many others, it is important and inspiring to do so. I am more comfortable when I stay closer to the idea of my "core beliefs" or personal values.

Let me illustrate what I mean with the following short piece of "freefall writing" entitled *Credo,* which came out of a creative writing course I went on last year (May 2000). The words were written in response to an invitation from the facilitator to write down statements beginning "I know" or "I believe."

Credo

I know that I am here today and that I will be gone tomorrow. That some trace of me will remain in those I have loved. That my children and my children's children will take their place and that my purpose in being here has been to bring them in to the world.

I believe, too, that there is something of me that is uniquely mine – not mine in the sense of possession, but mine in the sense of manifesting my self. I refuse to believe in nothing, in existential anomie – no matter how intellectually fashionable it has become to regard the self as an illusion.

I know that I have heard the sound of my own soul and that it (he, she) can guide me to a wider sense of purpose – my vocation, my calling – where, as I once heard it said, my own deep longing meets the world's needs.

I believe in light and shadow, that to banish either is impossible and to try is fruitless. I know that my strength comes out of darkness and my joy is in the light.

I believe people matter and strive to put this into practice with everyone I meet – though I often fail. To attempt anything is to fall short of what might be, but we grow most through our glorious failures.

I believe it is possible to love another but that first we must love ourselves. I believe in truth and beauty and that they are the same thing.

I believe that the planet is living and maybe dying, though I rarely have the courage to face the devastation and desolation, preferring to pretend that all is well.

I know that I will die, but not what comes after – if anything. I know that I am alive and am grateful (to whom? to what?) for this life.

I believe in men and women as equal and different. I know that we men have an enormous (if neglected) capacity for love and nurturing and that the same fierce energy that turns so eagerly to destruction can be used for good in the world.

By letting the words flow uncensored onto the page I think I got closer to the heart of what I believe than a more considered or analytical approach would have achieved. These are not definitive statements, they are not "true" in an absolute sense but I am happy to stand by them, at least for the time being.

Perhaps I get closest to articulating some overarching values in the sense in which I think you mean it Jack, early in the thesis when expressing my determination to live with authenticity, integrity and joy. A strong sense of these "personal values" supported me through the pain and trauma of separation and divorce into a new life. They were also central to my inquiry into my educational leadership (How can I lead in this process of Action Inquiry with authenticity, integrity and joy?) during the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project. I notice though, that when I refer to them in *Postcards from the Edge*, I say that I have become less attached to them, anxious that they might feed a stereotypical male agenda of heroic independence. That may have been a little premature but it is true that I am reluctant to offer them here as guiding principles for my life.

I think also, I am resisting your invitation to codify something, which for me, lies close to the ineffable mystery at the heart of living and inquiring. In the *Prelude,* I allude to a traditional Russian folk tale, *Go I know not whither, bring back I know not what,* in which the protagonist, *Fedot* follows a golden ball rolling before him on the first part of his journey. I speculated that the ball might represent some guiding values and wondered if mine were to do with authenticity, integrity and joy. Now, this seems to me to be an over-simplification and I think the question of what guides us is more complex and more problematic than I had allowed. In the story, the golden ball can only guide *Fedot* part of the way. To reach his destination he is aided by a frog, a creature traditionally associated with transformation, and one that brings together the elements of *mythos* (water – territory of the soul and the unconscious) and *logos* (land – territory of the active principle and the conscious mind).

And that seems to be where I have got to in my story, still going I know not whither to bring back I know not what, and guided less by concepts of social values and more by the mysterious voice of my soul – intimations, intuitions, insights and a kinaesthetic sense of rightness or "fit" – emerging perhaps from that "third place"

where *mythos* and *logos* meet. I do not want to reduce this mystery to a set of propositional value statements. Jack, it is not my intention to be dismissive of your suggestion to explicate my values but, right now, I would rather honour this mystery – as I do with my telling of the story of *Jumping Mouse*[2] – than seek to explain it.

Responding to my examiners

As I prepared for the *viva voce* examination of my thesis, I determined that I would seek to conduct myself in a manner congruent with the form of *living inquiry* that I espouse and enact in the thesis itself. Thus I wanted to defend my thesis without being unduly defensive and to keep myself open to the possibility of learning from the experience. The *viva* took place on 22nd March 2002 with Professor Helen Simons and Doctor Donna Ladkin. Whilst welcoming the scope and ambition of the thesis, they pressed me hard on issues relating to the theory, method, rigour, ethical propriety, and contribution to knowledge of my *scholarship of living inquiry.*

In recommending the award of a PhD, my examiners have asked me to make four minor amendments to clarify certain points in the text for the benefit of the reader. Responding to their request in the spirit of my continuing life of inquiry necessitates a transparent approach in which the amendments are presented explicitly as new material rather than being smuggled into the existing text. In this way, I hope that my learning from the process of examination and the contribution of my examiners to that learning will be apparent.

In the *viva*, Donna Ladkin had asked me to "say something about your theory of living inquiry" and I struggled to conjure up a suitable reply as, temporarily afflicted by the "crippling mutilations [of] an objectivist framework" (Polanyi 1958), I wrestled with conflicting notions of theory. Later, my examiners as a substitute for the word "theory" offered the helpful term "informing principles". Bringing together and making explicit the principles that inform my continuing practice of *living inquiry* is the first of the requested amendments.

[2] See – *Chapter Four: Healing Journeys*

Let me begin by offering a more considered view of what constitutes an appropriate form of theorising for a *scholarship of living inquiry* – a process in which, as Donald Schon puts it, we are more likely to find ourselves in the swampy lowlands of important though "ill-formed, vague and messy" problems, than on the high ground of familiar and relatively unimportant problems which are more susceptible to the conventional strictures of "technical rigour and academic respectability" (Schon 1995).

Consonant with the need to establish new forms of rigour for such research is the need to adopt a different form of theorising. Just as a post-modern sensibility is characterised by the demise of the grand narrative in human inquiry (Lyotard 1984) so too we must look to theory that is particular and situated in the context of the inquiry rather than to generalisable "grand" theories that offer universal explanations of individual and social phenomena through sets of interconnected propositional statements. Stephen Toulmin and Bjorn Gustavsen make the same point very effectively in relation to action research (which they call developmental research) in their book *Beyond Theory*[3] when they argue that its focus is:

> ...particular not universal, local not general, timely not eternal, and – above all – concrete not abstract (Toulmin and Gustavsen 1996)p3

and that:

> If... we accept that a theory can be validated through acting on it and seeing how it works, even a modest interpretation, based on limited data from a few people involved in a joint process of change, can be highly scientific *if it actually helps those concerned to do things better and achieve goals they value* (ibid p 27 – my emphasis).

I gave a great deal of thought to the title of the thesis. Unlatching the gate: Realising my scholarship of living inquiry reflects my concern to avoid reifying *living inquiry* into an abstract theory or transferable set of precepts for others to adopt. What I offer is my scholarship of living inquiry – a unique and original constellation of processes,

[3] I could equally well have turned to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) analysis of the shortcomings of universal "nomic" generalisations within naturalistic forms of inquiry.

practices and principles. I offer it in the hope that others may be able to relate to what I have to say and in the belief that we each have the capacity to develop our own forms of scholarship. The principles that inform my continuing life of inquiry are therefore simply an articulation of my current understanding of what guides and motivates my practice.

Much of this is contained in the twelve ontological and epistemological standards of judgement and criteria of validity that permeate the text. Indeed, in terms of "living theory" (Whitehead 1993; Whitehead 1998) I could argue that I have already offered these standards and criteria as an explanation of my learning in my life of inquiry. However, without detracting from their importance in developing and defining my *scholarship of living inquiry*, I believe that it is possible to identify a number of underlying principles – already implicit in the text – that may help the reader better understand the essential basis of my continuing life of inquiry. I present them here in no particular order of importance.

The *first* principle informing my continuing life of inquiry is to trust the primacy of my own lived experience whilst remaining open to the world of ideas and to what others may have to offer. As John Heron (Heron 1992) makes clear, experiential knowing is the absolute bedrock of human inquiry. Only when the experiential base is broad and deep can we build high quality presentational, propositional and practical knowing upon it.

The *second*, and related, principle is to value the originality of mind and critical judgement inherent in my own forms of sense-making and knowledge-creation. Without such a stance, as Mary Belenky and her fellow authors assert in *Women's Ways of Knowing*, one is simply a consumer of received knowledge (Belenky, Clinchy et al. 1986). From such a stance, I am free to explore and express my inquiries in poetry, stories, pictures, even dreams as well as through systematic analysis and conventional academic prose.

The *third* principle draws on Viktor Frankl's notion of the *will to meaning* (which he describes as "striving to find concrete meaning in personal existence") as a primary existential drive (Frankl 1984). It is to move towards what brings a sense of

significance and purpose to my life. Such understandings must not be allowed to become fixed and unquestioned but have, as I describe in *Reshaping my Professional Identity*, helped me to identify my vocation as an educator.

The *fourth* principle reflects an existential choice of optimism, of doing my best, of striving to make things better or to make the best of any given situation – for myself and with others. In *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*, I describe how this optimism may be born of joy (Fox 1983) or tragedy (Frankl 1984). Perhaps it is this desire to work for good in the world that has lead me to become an action researcher.

The *fifth* principle, illustrated in the poem *Meeting the Giant* in *Chapter One: Living Inquiry*, can be summarised as finding my own path. By this I mean something very similar to what mythologist Joseph Campbell (Cousineau 1999) calls "following one's bliss" or what Jungian analyst and author James Hollis says in *Creating a Life*:

> As individuals, we are not meant to be well-adjusted, sober servants of collective values. We are not meant to be sane, safe or similar. We are each of us, meant to be different. A proper course of therapy [and I would say also, living a life of inquiry] does not make us better adjusted; it makes us more eccentric, a unique individual who serves a larger project than that of the ego or collective norms (Hollis 2001) p109.

The *sixth* principle derives from a profound belief in the value of every human life and the possibility of learning from each other through communicating the particular events in which we participate and the choices we make. This entails a responsibility to account to others for my life of inquiry in the same sense as Polanyi's declaration:

> ... that I must understand the world from my point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising his personal judgement responsibly with universal intent (Polanyi 1958) p327.

I have kept the description of these principles necessarily brief because it is not my intention to open up new lines of inquiry at this point though it strikes me as I write, that they offer fascinating possibilities for some post-doctoral research. My continuing life of inquiry – informed by these six principles – follows its own *telos*,

towards that place where as James Hollis (Hollis 2001) puts it: "choice and destiny have been intending to meet since before we were born" (p122).

I want now to move on to the second amendment to the thesis, namely to be more explicit about positioning my *scholarship of living inquiry* vis a vis some of the related fields of inquiry that I refer to in the final section of *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* and in *Interlude V: Turning for home.* These include: action inquiry (Torbert 1991), co-operative inquiry (Reason and Rowan 1981; Reason 1988; Reason 1994; Heron 1996), narrative inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin 1999; Clandinin and Connelly 2000), naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985), living educational theory (Whitehead 1993; Whitehead 1998) and living life as inquiry (Marshall 1999; Marshall 2000) as well as the autobiographical tradition of educational self-study (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001).

I want to respond not by framing *living inquiry* in terms of these approaches but by identifying some of the ways I draw upon them and some of the edges I am pushing against in claiming to make an original contribution to an emerging scholarship of inquiry. The spirit in which I do so is one of opening up new territory for exploration rather than staking an exclusive claim to proprietorial rights. I shall concentrate here mainly on those that have received less attention elsewhere in the thesis.

As the term *living inquiry* begs a comparison with naturalistic inquiry, perhaps that would be a good place to start. My primary source is Lincoln and Guba's (Lincoln and Guba 1985) seminal text *Naturalistic Inquiry* which both challenged the prevailing positivist orthodoxy and offered a form of inquiry inspired by the notion of conducting social research in a "natural" setting. Whilst I have been much influenced by their critique of the positivist research paradigm, I find their description (which sometimes reads like a prescription) of naturalistic inquiry less convincing.

Thus, whilst I draw upon such notions as emergent research design, the holographic metaphor for information distribution (in which each part contains the whole), and the legitimacy and value of offering situated and specific findings rather than pseudo-scientific attempts to generalise on the basis of particular cases, there are also features of this methodology that I find unduly constrictive.

Although naturalistic inquiry challenges the positivist research paradigm, it is still cast in the mould of what Boyer (Boyer 1990) would call a traditional scholarship of discovery. That is to say it is largely concerned with *third-person research*[4], framed in terms of researchers doing fieldwork, selecting samples, analysing data, developing grounded theory and writing case reports. There is no suggestion of practical intervention through action research, little concession to endogenous *second-person research* nor, beyond a brief discussion of the researcher as "human instrument," is any consideration given to *first-person research.* Furthermore, the pre-eminence of propositional knowledge and conventional forms of data representation go largely unquestioned.

By way of contrast, my *living inquiry* steps beyond the boundaries of the scholarship of discovery, towards the realisation of a scholarship of inquiry in which the focus is on living the questions rather than seeking answers. My main concern is to better understand and improve my own personal and professional practice as a form of *first-person action research* although this involves me in *second-* and *third-person research* from time to time. When it does (as, for example, in the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project) I am very conscious of researching participatively with others. I am also pushing at the edges of naturalistic inquiry by espousing and enacting a complex and plural epistemology (in which logocentric and mythocentric forms of sense-making are equally valued) and by using a wide variety of alternative forms of representation (Eisner 1993; Eisner 1997) such as drawing and painting, photography, sculpture, poetry and creative "freefall" writing to convey emotional, aesthetic and spiritual values.

During the *viva*, particular mention was made of the relationship between *living inquiry* and forms of narrative inquiry. In view of this, I shall now turn to the work of Connelly and Clandinin (Connelly and Clandinin 1999; Clandinin and Connelly 2000), two Canadian teacher educators whose work on narrative inquiry I draw upon, particularly in *Chapter Five: Reshaping my Professional Identity*[5] where, in the opening

[4] See the section entitled *Questions of scope* in *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* for a discussion of the terms *third-*, *second-* and *first-person research* and how they are addressed in this thesis.
[5] Indeed, even the title of this chapter was inspired by their book *Shaping a Professional Identity* Connelly, F. M. and D. J. Clandinin (1999). Shaping a Professional Identity. New York, Teachers College Press.

pages, I acknowledge how influential their concepts of the "professional knowledge landscape" and "stories to live by" have been. I use these ideas to map my own changing professional knowledge landscape and to tell some of the stories I have lived by as my professional identity has shifted from policeman to educator. I share too their view on the place of theory in narrative forms of inquiry, beginning my *living inquiry* not with theory but with "experience as expressed in lived and told stories" (Clandinin and Connelly 2000) and:

> weav[ing] the literature throughout the dissertation from beginning to end in an attempt to create a seamless link between the theory and the practice embodied in the inquiry (ibid p41).

However, in other respects their notion of narrative inquiry is presented as an exogenous form of research, directed at describing and understanding the practice of others within a fairly conventional methodological framework of researcher-as-observer making field notes and writing research texts. In contrast, my *living inquiry* turns the storied lens upon myself in both personal and professional contexts to describe, understand and improve my practice through action research.

What then of the autobiographical tradition of educational self-study summarised in an excellent recent article by Robert Bullough and Steffinee Pinnegar *Guidelines for Quality in Autobiographical Forms of Self-Study Research*? (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001) There can be no doubt that this thesis falls within the broad category of self-study research and I find myself nodding at most of the fourteen guidelines they propose for high quality autobiographical research. I certainly agree with their comment that:

> ... self-study researchers inevitably face the added burden of establishing the virtuosity of their scholarship within and through the writing itself; lacking established authority each researcher must prove herself as a methodologist and writer (ibid. p15).

What I have drawn most strongly upon is the claim made by action researchers in this tradition for the legitimacy (and the importance) of practitioners researching to improve our own practice and of the inclusion of the self as integral to that process.

My *living inquiry* pushes at the edge of autobiographical self-study in the way I have "folded the text back on itself" to show how my distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity are embodied in and emerge from my practice. It pushes at the edge of educational self-study in my primary concern to address the holistic and inclusive question: What does it mean to live my life as inquiry? rather than the more typical educational action research question How can I improve (some aspect of) my professional practice? Both these assertions can be tested by comparing this text with the various autobiographical and educational self-study theses and dissertations posted by my supervisor Jack Whitehead on his website[6].

The relationship of my *living inquiry* to Bill Torbert's (Torbert 1991) work on action inquiry is ambivalent. On the one hand, I frequently find his language impenetrable and I reject the eight-stage linear model of human development (from impulsive to ironist) in which he places so much faith in favour of more generative notions of Jungian individuation and of the parallel cross-gendered development of *animus* and *anima* described thus by Labouvie-Vief (Labouvie-Vief 1994):

> The concept of an integration of logos and mythos, often personified by the image of the marriage of the masculine and feminine... offers an important new metaphor for the mind and its development (p14)

On the other hand, I find his work full of brilliant insights and some aspects have profoundly influenced my own. Indeed, I have even appropriated (with acknowledgements) the terms *action inquiry* – which I use in connection with the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project – and *living inquiry* – which is central to my thesis – from the concluding chapters of his book *The Power of Balance* (op. cit.).

Torbert uses the words *action inquiry* to signify a kind of *first-person* "scientific inquiry that is conducted in everyday life" with the aim of achieving "consciousness in the midst of action":

[6] www.actionresearch.net

> ... a special kind of widened attention that embraces all four territories of experience (intuition, reason, one's own action, and the outside world) [and] is, therefore, both the ultimate aim and the primary research instrument in action inquiry (p221).

I use the same words differently in relation to the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project, to signify a form of *second-person* research process in which a group comes together collaboratively to inquire into and improve their practice in a particular area.

In terms of *living inquiry* it seems to me that Bill Torbert (in *The Power of Balance*) and I (in this thesis) have asked ourselves the same question: What does it mean to live my life as inquiry? In response, we have both traced the course of our personal and professional lives through the trials and tribulations of family life, marital breakdown, the joys of friendship and the renewal of love, the struggles to be truly effective in the world and to find some peace with ourselves. It seems to me that we are both committed to living our whole lives as inquiry and that – to appropriate another phrase – we each walk this path with our own distinctive "stumbling gait".

Finally, let me touch upon the approaches exemplified by my tutors; co-operative inquiry (Peter Reason), living educational theory (Jack Whitehead) and living life as inquiry (Judi Marshall). These are already addressed elsewhere in the thesis so I shall be brief.

The *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project, described at length in *Chapter Five: Reshaping my Professional Identity*, drew heavily upon the form of co-operative inquiry developed by Peter Reason and John Heron (Reason and Rowan 1981; Reason 1988; Reason 1994; Heron 1996) but – like all such inquiries – was shaped in response to the demands of the context and circumstances in which it was conducted, in this case particular attention being paid to the challenge of conducting a co-operative inquiry in an overtly hierarchical police organisation. Generally speaking however, my use of this methodology in the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project was within a well-established framework. I am pushing at the edges of scope and scale in co-operative inquiry (and at the edges of my understanding and competence as a co-operative inquirer) as I develop my role as director of the action inquiry element of the Public

Service Leaders Scheme[7], setting the parameters for, and supervising the practice of, a team facilitating eight parallel groups involving nearly one hundred participants.

Throughout the thesis, I have acknowledged the multifarious influence of Jack Whitehead, my supervisor. As I make clear earlier in this chapter in our imaginary dialogue, I have resisted subsuming my *scholarship of living inquiry* within his notion of living educational theory, though I have adopted elements such as "I" as a living contradiction, and the embodiment of theory in practice. In particular, I stop short of articulating a set of overarching values in favour of twelve distinctive "standards of judgement and criteria of validity" and six "informing principles" for my continuing life of inquiry. By folding the text back on itself to show how my standards of judgement and criteria of validity are embodied in and emerge from my practice, I have pushed at the edge of living educational theory to create and communicate an epistemology of practice (going beyond my practice as an educator) that others can use to inform their own judgements as well as to test the validity of my claims to knowledge.

Some of the ways I draw upon Judi Marshall's recent work on living life as inquiry (Marshall 1999; Marshall 2000) are also outlined earlier in this chapter in the imaginary dialogues with my tutors. Despite the obvious similarities, there are several significant differences in our respective approaches to living life as inquiry. Our work is embedded in very different contexts and follows different trajectories: mine represents an attempt as a lay researcher to bring the stuff of my everyday life into the realm of research and scholarship whereas Judi's work might be thought of as extending the focus of her academic scholarship outwards to incorporate aspects of her everyday life.

Whatever the underlying reasons (and they can only be speculative) I would point to three aspects of our written or published work where these differences surface: focal width, vulnerability and forms of representation. *First*, Judi's recent published work on living life as inquiry (Marshall 1999; Marshall 2000) has quite a tight focus, zooming in with finely grained attention on specific aspects of her personal and

[7] A three-year programme for present and future leaders in central and local government, health, police and voluntary sectors established by the Cabinet Office in 2001.

professional practice. In this thesis, with the luxury of many more words at my disposal, I am more inclined to zoom out and sweep across the panorama of my life, tracking the emergence and development of my inquiries into my practice as a man, my conduct in loving relationships, my search for healing, and the shift in my professional identity from policeman to educator.

Second, despite Judi's declaration that she does not want to "tell confessional tales to no purpose... or to make myself or others vulnerable" (Marshall 1999), she is prepared to risk making herself vulnerable as a professional academic (for example by writing from the perspective of her own gendered experience about her inquiry into *speaking at Senate*). I too have pushed at the edge of vulnerability, revealing intimate details of ritual experiences, writing from the "ruin" of my marital breakdown, sharing my healing journeys and the vicissitudes of thirty years in the police service. In this I have, perhaps, followed the opposite tack from Judi by making myself more personally than professionally vulnerable (though, of course, the two cannot be separated).

Third, realising my scholarship of living inquiry in the form of a PhD thesis has allowed me to express myself through a wide range of "alternative" forms of representation such as drawing and painting, photography, sculpture and poetry as well as the academic and creative prose forms favoured by Judi in her published work.

In all these ways I am pushing at the edges of established methods and approaches to realise *my scholarship of living inquiry* through what I called earlier, "a unique and original constellation of processes, practices and principles." Doing so has been a profoundly emancipatory act for myself and possibly for others who may come to realise their own scholarship of living inquiry in their own way. I am encouraged in this belief by the comments of several colleagues who read my PhD submission. The following, for example, is quoted with permission from Eleanor Lohr, a fellow PhD student in the CARPP research community:

> Your obstinacy and determination to pursue and create your own living inquiry has inspired me and shown me how it might be possible to write my own story in my own way – and to discover and frame theory around the narratives in such a way that it expands my understanding and adds depth and meaning. Your draft has enabled me to

> respect and honour my experience, and has given me the courage to try again to write what I mean, and to think more clearly about the fundamental beliefs that inform my sense-making. [8]

The third amendment requested by my examiners, was to make a stronger point about my methodology of action research through writing about my inquiries. Although the text already refers to writing-as-inquiry at several points, it seems important to make this quite clear "up front" in the opening sections of the thesis. Understanding this will affect the stance of the reader who will then be able to see how I gradually come to realise my *scholarship of living inquiry* as I develop my capacity to deepen the dialogue between the originality of my authentic inquiry process and the rigorous application of my critical judgement. I have therefore added a short section to this effect towards the end of *Chapter One: Living Inquiry* as well as making further explicit references to this method in the *Abstract* and the *Introduction*.

The final amendment (ironically given the many intervening variants) was simply to reinstate the original version of the *Abstract* at the head of the thesis - albeit with some amendments to emphasise the methodology of action research through writing about my inquiries and to include some reference to the principles informing my continuing life of inquiry. I have done so gladly (and also amended *Interlude III: Writing an abstract* to reflect this change).

That concludes the four amendments requested by my examiners at the *viva voce.* I have taken the time to engage properly with them because I genuinely wanted to learn from the process and each of them has added something of value to the thesis. Articulating the six informing principles draws out the dynamics of *living inquiry*. Positioning it in relation to some established methods and approaches clarifies the originality of my contribution to an emerging scholarship of inquiry. Highlighting the method of action research through writing about my inquiries provides a clear signpost to the reader. Reinstating the original *Abstract* gives a more comprehensive (and comprehensible) overview of the thesis as a whole.

[8] Personal communication 3rd February 2002

Last words

Having responded as well as I can to what I imagine are the concerns of my tutors and to the issues raised by my examiners, I recognise too that all readers will bring their own standards of judgement and criteria of validity to bear when assessing this thesis. I welcome that and I just ask you to be open, also, to the standards that I set for my *living inquiry* as a work of art.

How well have I met my own standards? Like the Zen archer, by painting the targets after my arrows have landed, I could claim "every time a bull's eye." In that sense, *living inquiry* transcends (or possibly side-steps) notions of success or failure. Yet, in another sense, I confess that I constantly fall short of my aspirations and evolving standards. As Rilke (Bly, Hillman et al. 1992), one of my favourite poets, says:

> Winning does not tempt that man.
> This is how he grows: by being defeated, decisively,
> by constantly greater beings.

In a third sense, and for the purposes of this PhD thesis, I think have articulated my standards of judgement and practice with sufficient clarity, and met them sufficiently well, to claim both epistemological validity and academic legitimacy for my *living inquiry.*

I believe that my modest claim to be making a contribution to a scholarship of inquiry is sufficiently well articulated in its own terms to communicate my meaning and to be susceptible to your judgement. If I were to turn to anyone to support this claim, it would again be Rilke (Rilke 1934) who, as so often in my experience, speaks wisely and with a profound simplicity:

> I want to beg you, as much as I can, dear sir [sic] to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the *questions themselves* like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. (p35)

I am seeking to "live the questions now" in my narratives of *living inquiry* and I am realising my *scholarship of living inquiry* now, in this thesis, as I both show and tell the nature of my contribution to this emerging scholarship through explorations of the purpose and scope of my *living inquiry*, my epistemology and forms of sense-making, my distinctive standards of judgement and criteria of validity, and questions of methodology and position.

As the author of this text and as the author of my own life, after all that I have experienced and written about *living inquiry*, I am wondering how to answer my own question: What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry? I have cleared away the myriad books and articles that surrounded me as I wrote earlier chapters in order to address you, the reader, from the ground of my own being. I imagine you sitting, here and now, across the table, curious and expectant, a fellow inquirer, a fellow traveller on "the path with heart."

Let me try to draw the threads together, well enough perhaps to attempt an answer. I want to address you in my own authentic voice, answering the question in its own terms without reference to other scholars, claiming my originality and speaking "with universal intent". My aim is to move beyond complexity, to speak simply and directly in a way that expresses my self-generated creativity and does justice to my different forms of knowing. I console myself with the thought that all I can do, all I will ever be able to do, is to answer my question provisionally. If *living inquiry* is to be a whole-life, life-long process, there can be no absolute, ultimate or definitive answer until the moment of death and, even then, it may be that our questing souls live on.

So. What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry? It means, to live my life as fully as I can, from an optimistic stance, and choosing to act as if I matter, as if each of us matters, as if we can make a difference in the world. For me, living <u>is</u> inquiring. I am therefore I inquire. If inquiry is the attempt to live the best life one can, what alternative is there? It means widening the orbit of our lives, becoming concerned with bigger questions without losing sight of the smaller ones. My *living inquiry* spirals back and forth, inwards and outwards.

As Rilke[9] says:

> I live my life in growing orbits,
> which move out over the things of the world.
> Perhaps I can never achieve the last,
> but that will be my attempt.
>
> I am circling around God, around the ancient tower.
> and I have been circling for a thousand years.
> and I still don't know if I am a falcon, or a storm,
> or a great song.

Living my life as inquiry means everything that is in this thesis (and more besides). It is all these experiences, all these narratives, all this sense-making, all the words and all the images. This is what it has meant for me to consciously live my life as inquiry. This is also what it means for me to research my life as inquiry and to offer my embodied knowing as a contribution to an emerging scholarship of inquiry. I am claiming, rashly perhaps, that my ontology is my epistemology, that my living is my knowing, that the standards by which I seek to live my life are also the criteria of validity for the knowledge I create. Let me share an image with you that may give some insight into what I mean by this.

I took this photograph (overleaf) of an orange tree in Spain last year (2001). I was sitting in a shady corner, writing about *living inquiry*, tapping out words on my laptop, when I glanced up and saw the tree right in front of me. I think it must have been the scent of the blossom that caught my attention. As I looked more closely, I could see (as the picture shows) that the branches carry ripe fruit, blossom and buds. "That's me," I thought. "I'm fifty-one years old. Some parts of me have ripened, some are gone, but I also have new growth and I'm blossoming too – as a man, a father, a lover, a healer, an educator, as a researcher, writer and storyteller."

[9] Bly, R., J. Hillman, et al., Eds. (1992). The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart. New York, Harper Collins.

As a knowledge-creator too, I follow the same cyclical pattern from the first buds of curiosity to the ripe fruit of relationships, projects, ideas and papers that come out of my changing practice: a small basket of oranges that is my unique gift to the world. The memory of that moment, held in the photograph, brings a sense of quiet joy and gratitude for my life and reaffirms my passion for *living inquiry.*

Do you catch something of what I am trying to say? Does the image speak to you, too? Can you feel the life affirming energy that runs through the tree, through you, through me? That is the energy that fuels my *living inquiry.* It is no longer a desperate struggle, born of suffering, to remedy the deficiencies in my life.

Right now, it is a desire to share more of myself with the world: to take my place, after many years as apprentice and journeyman, as a mature craftsman: to teach as well as to learn: to move consciously into the next phase of my life: to accept the responsibilities and duties of elderhood: to continue to inquire with passion and

purpose: to be both more rigorous and more reckless in exploring the myriad possibilities of a life lived as inquiry.

And there you have it. Thank you for accompanying me on this "path with heart". Your imagined presence throughout the journey has helped me to respond directly to the question that this whole thesis seeks to address: What does it mean for me to live my life as inquiry? I hope that it has stimulated you to ask similar questions. Let us have the tenacity and courage to go on living the questions. If we are fortunate, we may perhaps "live along some distant day" into the answers we seek.

Note

Ethical considerations

Putting such personal accounts of *living inquiry* into the public domain poses significant ethical dilemmas for the writer. Unlike biomedical or conventional behavioural research, there are no generally accepted ethical guidelines specifically designed for participative or self-study research. Nevertheless, the overarching principles of Beneficence, Justice and Respect for Persons, established by *The Belmont Report*[1] in 1979 provide a broad ethical framework within which to conduct any form of human inquiry.

The principle of Beneficence expresses the idea that human research should be conducted with the intention of benefiting (and avoiding harming) others.

The principle of Justice requires that the benefits and burdens of human research be equitably distributed.

The principle of Respect for Persons tells us that autonomous people should be allowed to make informed and voluntary choices about participating in human research and that people who are unable to make such choices need to be protected.

Few would contest these principles but interpreting them in practice can be difficult. In particular, the convention of avoiding harm to others by maintaining the anonymity of human research subjects breaks down when their close relationship to the author makes them readily identifiable. Furthermore, any form of self-study inevitably involves others, some of whom may neither wish, nor be in a position to give their informed consent to "participate" in such research. Using pseudonyms for my ex-wife Sara, my lover Alison, my children Nicky, Jamie, Georgie and Tom would not afford them any protection. One could also question whether they were given the opportunity to make informed and voluntary choices to appear in this text. Yet, how

[1] *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research* produced by the United States National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research (http://orhp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm)

could I have explored my conduct in loving relationships in any meaningful way without referring to them?

In writing these narratives of *living inquiry* I have been very conscious of making different ethical choices about these issues in respect of different people and groups of people. Least problematic was the treatment of professional colleagues involved as co-inquirers in educational action research. Here (as in the various educational action research inquiries described in *Reshaping my Professional Identity*) I disguised the origin of all personal material by the use of pseudonyms and/or by avoiding the use of names. When, as with the *Developing Ourselves as Leaders* project, an activity was clearly identifiable as research, participants gave their voluntary and informed consent and were invited to check and comment on my interpretations of the group's work. Occasionally, as a matter of courtesy, I have identified close professional colleagues when referring to interactions with them, which I judge to be neither damaging nor contentious.

With my professional colleagues I think I can claim with reasonable confidence to have complied with the British Educational Research Association's (BERA's) ethical guidelines for educational research[2] - specifically the following two guidelines:

> 7. Participants in a research study have the right to be informed about the aims, purposes and likely publication of findings involved in the research and of potential consequences for participants, and to give their informed consent before participating in research.
>
> 13. Informants and participants have a right to remain anonymous. This right should be respected when no clear understanding to the contrary has been reached. Researchers are responsible for taking appropriate precautions to protect the confidentiality of both participants and data. However, participants should also be made aware that in certain situations anonymity cannot be achieved.

The deeper I move into personal territory however, the further away from conventional research I get and the more difficult it is to apply such guidelines. With

[2] First published in 1992 and now available on the internet at www.bera.ac.uk/guidelines.html

close friends such as Peter Neall and Chris Cole (and with my lover Alison) I have shown them what I have written about them and asked for feedback. They have given their permission for its publication and to be named in the thesis. Colleagues at CARPP have similarly given explicit permission to be named and for emails, correspondence, dialogues and other material to be included.

In regard to my ex-wife Sara and our children, I judged that asking them to comment on what I had written so close to our separation and divorce would only add to their distress. Instead, I have been very conscious of the need to work the "edge" around personal stories with awareness and sensitivity to my own and other's vulnerability. As I say in *Interlude II: The space between*: "Some stories are simply not mine to tell and some that are have no place in this thesis". I have focused on telling my story – rather than theirs – and where they figure I have taken great care to include them respectfully. They all know that I have written about the breakdown and renewal of our relationships in the thesis. Nicky (26) and Georgie (19), our two daughters have said that they would like to read it sometime after its publication.

Faced with similar dilemmas, other researchers – for good reasons – may well have made different choices. I include this brief note to acknowledge the tensions and difficulties around the ethics of participatory and self-study research, and to demonstrate that I have approached the issues thoughtfully, rather than to argue that I made the "right" choices.

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Appendix A

Police stories[1]

Joining up

How I came to join the police is a strange story in its own right. I had no family connections, no previous contact with the police and no idea what I wanted to do for a living. When I was twenty one I lived with an older woman - Poppy. It was 1970/71 and, as a proto-hippy and temporary "toyboy" I had dropped out of university after my second year. Poppy was a stabilising influence. She talked about achievement, career and success as essential to a man's attractiveness (her previous lover had been a millionaire businessman) and she encouraged me to resume my studies to complete my degree. Unknown to me, she had sent for an information pack about the police graduate entry scheme. "I think this might suit you" she said, handing me the folder. I thought "Why not?" and completed the application form. The sheer perversity of it appealed to me. There I was, a long-haired, dope-smoking dropout applying to join the police. It was done half in jest.

A few months later (after our relationship had ended and I had begun to go out with my future wife Sara) I went off to a three day "country house" extended interview. I had absolutely nothing to lose and steamed through all the tests and interviews. Lo and behold, within three weeks I had a letter offering me a place in the Hertfordshire Constabulary under the "Special Course" accelerated promotion scheme, subject to passing my finals which, in due course, I did. A lower second BA in mediaeval history does not make one an obvious candidate for academic or commercial stardom and I accepted the offer to join the police. It is the only job application I have ever made!

After graduation I took a short holiday, cut off about six inches of hair and reported for duty (another grand phrase) at Hertfordshire Police Headquarters. For two weeks, before being sent off for basic recruit training, I was shown the ropes by various

[1] A reflection on my thirty-year police career written July-August 1998, updated December 2001

constables and sergeants. It soon became clear that I was an oddity. "Why do you want to join the police if you've got a degree?". I would answer defensively that if the job was good enough for them, it was good enough for me - and we got on pretty well. I'm glad that I had that time rubbing shoulders with my future colleagues (all men as I remember - we had a separate specialist policewomen's department for dealing with sexual offences, children and young persons) because I would not have survived basic training without that glimpse of a real world to return to as a touchstone.

Basic training was a fourteen week residential course living in barracks on an old RAF station on the Yorkshire moors. I felt as though I had landed on another planet. After four years away from home doing pretty much what I liked, when I liked, I entered a world in which I was shouted at from dawn to dusk, marched round a freezing parade ground at the double and obliged to spend hours bulling boots and pressing trousers. Classroom instruction was equally primitive - rote learning of legal definitions and "points to prove", weekly tick-box tests and a complete lack of appreciation for the intellectual sensibilities of a young graduate (ha ha).

For the first few weeks it was only pride and a stubborn determination not to be beaten that kept me there. Gradually however, something shifted inside me. I began to enjoy the companionship of the dozen or so young men in my syndicate. We helped each other. One or two who had been cadets taught me the tricks required for a smart turnout on parade and I would explain some of the more obscure points of legal jargon. At some point we collectively decided that we would all survive the experience and I determined to excel.

What had been marching out of step round the parade ground became "drill" - and we loved it. The crisp, synchronised steps, the rhythmic swinging of arms and legs in unison, the precision of ..... "Squad ... halt .. two ... three... stamp" became a kind of dance to which the key was co-operation - a surrendering of the self to the whole. I am smiling with pleasure now as I recall the joy of getting it right on our pass out parade. I was top of the class, and awarded the Police Mutual Assurance Society book prize - a blue leather-bound Chambers Dictionary which I still use.

Basic training was not an experience I would willingly repeat and I am rather ashamed now at the ease with which I allowed myself to be assimilated into what was then an anti-intellectual culture full of sexist and racist behaviour, but -and there is a but - I was accepted. I had joined the club, I was a new member of the police family. I returned to Hertfordshire eager to get down to some real policework. For the next two years I walked the beat and drove Panda cars in my hometown, St Albans.

My memories of that time are mixed. I can still taste the fear of being sent to pub fights and violent domestic incidents. I encountered death for the first time. I experienced the changing face of the town throughout the days and nights. I walked down lonely alleys at four in the morning, heart in mouth as a cat screeched in the darkness inches from my ear. I enjoyed the warm hospitality of nightworkers in hotel kitchens, hospital emergency rooms and what were then called mental homes and asylums. I met people in great distress who needed my help and I met people who wanted to harm me. Despite the self-conscious jocularity of colleagues I became a sort of mascot "This is Geoff, he's our graduate entrant you know" - said with a sort of awkward pride reminiscent of showing off a slightly eccentric offspring.

Although I always based my social life outside the police, I formed some friendships among my fellow constables that have lasted twenty five years to the present day. We had fun, we looked after each other and we did our best to catch the bad guys and look after the good guys (including, and especially, women and children). We were knights errant charging around with "blues and twos" from incident to incident. On the whole, they were good years. I came across some resentment and prejudice against fast-trackers, though generally I think that I gained the respect of my peers and the good opinion of the bosses. Our universe was small - it was hard to see further than the shift sergeant. What he (sic) said, went. Inspectors hove into view on rare occasions and were to be avoided if possible. Superintendents were semi-divine beings who lived on the top floor where they wrote letters and checked registers. The Chief Constable was God. Women were not much in evidence - they did not do patrol work ("too dangerous"). It was rumoured that there was a WPC on our division but I never believed it.

I was determined to make it on "their" terms, as a practical copper and did all I could to play down my graduate entry status. After two years I was rewarded by a posting to CID at Hemel Hempstead ..... another new world. Actually, if anything, I had stepped back in time to an older world. Like the Great Hall in Titus Groan, CID had been undisturbed for decades. It was a closed world with its own rules and a smug belief in its own superiority. The prevailing mythology was of "cracking cases" and "meeting snouts", of "getting a cough". Best of all, we got to wear suits and drive plain cars. We had all watched too much "Sweeney" on television!

The reality was very different. Heavy drinking, hours and hours of hanging around (CID officers never went home), incessant paperwork, flimsy cases put together with scant regard for procedure and with a rudimentary knowledge of the law. Of course, I willingly allowed myself to get sucked in. By that time, I was married with our first child on the way .... but I was more married to CID. I bought it lock, stock and barrel. Sara hated it, and the person I was becoming - loutish, selfish and superior. Fortunately it was only a year. I think I got out in time to avoid permanent damage - perhaps somewhere, deep down, I knew it was not how I wanted to be.

Getting on

With three and a half year's service, I left Hemel Hempstead on temporary promotion to sergeant to go to the Police Staff College at Bramshill for the year long "Special Course" - the start of my accelerated promotion. It was ghastly - one of the worst periods of my life. We had been promised the world; the finest tutors, leadership development, stimulation, learning. Instead we got a year of hot-house competition, being treated like children, separation from our families, mind-numbing lectures from second rate academics, and an endless procession of senior police officers telling us "Be like me, my boy. That's how to succeed". At the end of the course I swore never to return to Bramshill under any circumstances (in the event it was to be eight years before I crossed its threshold again). My only good memory is of proposing the motion "This house believes in Santa Claus" at the end of year debate and discovering that I have the capacity to hold an audience and to make people laugh.

Our intake of about forty has since produced three or four chief constables, the chief executive of a privatised water authority, a good number of superintendents and above, some who never progressed beyond inspector, several mental breakdowns, one suicide and one criminal (imprisoned for perjury). There were two women on the course who were generally treated as a bit of a joke and one excellent woman chief inspector on the staff. As far as I know they resisted all our attempts to "get inside their knickers". As a group of young men - average age twenty six - our behaviour was pretty appalling. My neighbour introduced himself to me by coming unannounced into my room and pissing in the sink. I was profoundly disillusioned. If we were "the best" - God help us.

There followed a year as a uniformed sergeant at Watford - a busy and quite violent town. Again I had to steel myself to deal with the drunks and punch-ups, armed robberies, accidents and murder. This time I was also responsible for leading others. I remembered some of the ways I had been treated, both positive and negative, and tried to model myself on the best of what I had seen. I did not have an original thought in my head. I succeeded by finding out what was expected of me and learning quickly how to "perform". I survived the year, more by luck than judgement, without any great mishap and was deemed suitable to continue on the accelerated promotion track to Inspector.

The circumstances of my promotion proved to be somewhat bizarre. I had arranged to work half-nights so as to get some sleep and freshen up before seeing the Chief Constable mid morning. In the event, I had to deal with a sudden death and a police vehicle accident so I worked all night and arrived tired and bedraggled at headquarters the next morning. After an interminable delay I was called in to the Chief's office - as I thought, to be promoted. In my weariness I clearly said something that upset him (to this day I have no idea what). He shouted at me and, literally, jumped up and down behind his desk. "Don't you think, Mr Mead, that you are just a little bit too casual?" ... "Who? Me sir? No sir" .. "Well, I do.. get out".

I was stunned. Here was the Chief Constable ranting at me like a playground bully. I knew that I had to stand up to him. I had been bullied for years at boarding school

until I learned to stand up for myself. I refused to leave the room. Pandemonium. More shouting. I explained that, far from being casual, I was exhausted because I had been working all night and it was now 11.00 am. Suddenly, he subsided, smiled at me and within a few minutes clapped me on the back and promoted me to Inspector. I shook for the rest of the day, in shock. It occurred to me that we were lead by a madman - and nobody could blow the whistle.

The next two years as a uniformed inspector were generally uneventful. I spent most of them catching up on the things I should have learned as a sergeant. Then, for the following two and a half years I languished in the backwaters of the recruiting department. It was there that my mentor Trefor Morris came on the scene. He was the new Deputy Chief Constable and had come down from Manchester. Until his family could join him, he lived in a flat on the headquarters site. That summer I often worked late giving careers talks and would sometimes spend an hour or two in the early evening practising golf shots on the playing field. Trefor Morris (who was an excellent golfer) strolled over one evening and introduced himself. We chatted briefly and I thought how lonely he must be living alone on campus so I invited him to join me in a round of golf.

I knew at the time that I was running the risk of being seen as a creep, but I was satisfied that my motive was altruistic. He accepted with obvious pleasure. It was a good start to our relationship - we had met "person to person" - and although we were never close, we continue to have a mutual regard and affection. I bumped into him at a police exhibition last week, now Sir Trefor Morris, retired Chief Inspector of Constabulary and enjoyed a brief reunion.

Testing time

A few months after our first meeting Trefor Morris phoned to ask me if I would like to be a Detective Inspector. I gulped and said "Yes, please" before he could change his mind. It was absolutely unheard of for anyone to become a Detective Inspector who had not spent many years in CID. In hindsight, I can see that he was using me to

break that pattern - as well as provide me with an opportunity to prove myself and move on.

This was the hardest move I ever made professionally. I did not have the credibility or experience to be an old-fashioned DI. I could no longer simply fulfil other peoples expectations. I had to look inside myself to shape a useful contribution. It took some months before I began to find a way. I had two useful skills - I could think my way out of a paper bag and I could talk to people. So I relied on my Detective Sergeants to do their job and looked to add value by managing the complex enquiries and by patiently interrogating stubborn or recalcitrant prisoners.

It was, without doubt, a turning point. Once I had looked inside myself for purpose and direction, there was no going back. For the first time in my life I began to seriously question who I was and what I was about. Terrifyingly, I also discovered a great void and heard the laughing echoes of the long-silenced demons of my childhood. I had no idea what to do about such things and tried to ignore them.

Within twelve months I was promoted again, to Chief Inspector and put in temporary charge of a small sub-division. I emptied my in-tray each day, making decisions on the prosecution of various petty offences, and wondered what else I should be doing. It seemed to me that the more I got promoted, the more trivial the work. I had no conception of leadership other than occasionally to go out in front in public order situations. I tried to deal with people and problems humanely and with a sense of humour but that was about as far as it went.

Soon I was moved sideways to become Detective Chief Inspector in charge of a divisional CID unit. Again the work was mostly routine - huge piles of paper to read and initial. All I achieved was to ameliorate the drinking culture somewhat by personal example and setting clear expectations. I was supported by two good, old-school Detective Inspectors. I made it clear that I respected their experience and, in turn they were both loyal and supportive. I stayed in this post for a year, during which I established some credibility as a senior detective although there was some scepticism and resentment from those who saw me as taking their "rightful" place.

I am enjoying writing this narrative. I feel that I am (re)connecting with my own (his)story. In doing so, I can see how much I have been shaped by the very culture I now challenge and seek to change. I guess I have a love-hate relationship with the police service. I sometimes wonder what on earth I am doing as a policeman at all. Yet, it has become my second family - with all the ambivalence that brings - and I care deeply about its people and its place in society.

In recent years I have been a self-appointed change agent, quick to criticise and find fault, but I see now that I need to engage my love for the service and my compassion for its members (especially those I want to change) if I am to be truly effective. I have to acknowledge my portion of responsibility for how things are and not blame "them". I am hardly an unwilling victim of the system - "them" includes me! I have to reframe my conception that the service has simply robbed me of something. It has also been the vessel within which I have struggled and grown for nearly all my adult life. In it I have found the will and created the space for some kind of personal transformation. It has been both demanding and nurturing - in story terms its energy is more like that of the great mother than the tyrannical father. This reflection has rather shaken my simplistic thesis that the ills of the service can be laid solely at the door of oppressive masculinity - but it has also provided an additional and fascinating layer of complexity to be explored.

I notice also how little I have mentioned marriage and family life in the preceding pages. In fact, Sara and I married a year after I joined the police and had four children during the period I have described - however, my life was dominated by work. I saw little of my children and, although I like to think I was close and loving when I was around, they would probably describe me as an absent father for most of their childhood. Sara and I were both emotionally illiterate and our relationship was heading towards the rocks.

Opening up

At the end of 1984 I was called up to headquarters to see the Assistant Chief Constable, David Bayliss. He told me that it was in my best interest to accept a staff

job as Chief Inspector, Research and Planning. I disagreed vehemently. I was still convinced that I had to acquire impeccable operational credentials - that's what real (police)men did, after all. But he was equally adamant that I would be transferred. It still goes against the grain to acknowledge that he knew better than me - but he did.

For the first few weeks I kept looking at my empty in-tray, thinking that I did not have a proper job. Then, one day the penny dropped. It was up to me to create my own work. I could go anywhere in the organisation, I had access to everyone, I could get involved and initiate all manner of projects - and I did! I felt as though I had suddenly grown up. My job was no longer to fulfil other people's expectations. It was to decide how best I could contribute to the good of the organisation. What a sense of liberation and excitement. I worked prodigiously hard - 12,14,16 hour days - getting involved in anything that moved; Home Office Circular 114/83 (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Economy), Police and Criminal Evidence Act, computerised Burglary Pattern Analysis, evaluating policing systems, secretary to four or five working parties. I was a one man "think tank" and I became the confidante of the chief officers who fed off my efforts.

My intellectual curiosity was reawakened. I became more reflective in my practice and hungry to learn. In particular, I was frustrated that my attempts to bring about change by memorandum seemed to have no effect on the ground. This was puzzling and I began to explore notions of change management, process consultancy and organisation development for the first time. I was asked to mentor a Special Course student (Peter Fahy who, to my delight, has just become Assistant Chief Constable in Surrey) and I attended a week long mentoring skills programme at Bramshill. The prospect of actually helping someone through the process I had endured alone was the only thing powerful enough to make me go back to Bramshill.

It was a revelation. The course tutors declined to give us the answers - we had to work things out for ourselves, from our own resources. Some of the delegates got tremendously angry about this, demanding to be told what to do. Towards the end of the week, the facilitator asked for a couple of delegates to lead the next morning's "learning review" and I volunteered with one other. The two of us talked until two or

three in the morning, trying to work out how to handle this task and eventually we decided that we would, metaphorically, go naked into the room
with no other plan than to ask the group "What did you learn yesterday?" Uproar! We had been expected to turn the tables on the facilitators - instead we had "sold out". Tempers flared, voices raised. "Emote away" sneered one delegate. "Damn you" I yelled back.

We moved into chaos and out the other side. One particular delegate who had been amongst the most intractable sat with tears in his eyes, telling us that he felt he had nothing to offer and that, actually, he was scared that he would not be able to discharge the responsibility of helping someone else learn and develop. His contribution was crucial. For the first time in my life, I sat in a room full of (police)men speaking from the heart. It was very moving, though I did not have any idea how it had come about. "At least", I thought, "there is a better way".

I wanted more of this and got myself invited onto a five day residential consultancy skills course run by the County Council. Within a few hours we were laughing and crying and sharing our deepest secrets. I got hooked on personal development and I fell in love ..... with one of the trainers. She personified this wonderful new world in which feelings were welcomed and which offered completely new ways of thinking and behaving in organisations. Our illicit relationship lasted two years and we were as much in love the day we parted as when we met - but that is another story.

Coming into my own

Fired with enthusiasm, I was selected for a three month course at the FBI Academy in Virginia, USA. I had a lot of time there to reflect, study, research and travel. I wrote a paper on organisational development in law enforcement agencies and began to think about how I wanted to be different as a leader. Instead of telling people what to do I would facilitate them, instead of having all the answers I would admit my ignorance, instead of feeding off people I would nurture and develop them. Big ideas - and on my return I had the chance to put them to the test because Trefor Morris

promoted me to Superintendent and put me in charge of Watford - the biggest and busiest sub-division in the force.

When I arrived morale was at rock bottom. Within the first few weeks I had, to my astonishment, a succession of desperate men and women coming to my office, sometimes in tears, telling me that things could not go on as they had been. I decided that I wanted the place to feel different. I wanted people to feel trusted and valued. I expected managers to take responsibility and to care for their people.

I stayed two and a half years, resisting the offer of a career move after eighteen months. In the early days I was regarded as a lunatic. "What shall we do?" I was asked. "What do you want to do?" I would reply. I once overhead myself described as "That pratt who can't make a decision". However, I persisted. A station sergeant came into my office one day and said "I've got a prisoner in and I'm not sure what to charge him with. What shall I do?". My response was to ask "What options do you have, what are the pros and cons of each?" He told me and I said "OK - you seem to have a pretty good grasp of the possibilities - what is your decision?" He said "I don't know the answer" to which I replied "It is your job to decide, even when you don't know the answer. It is my job to help you consider the possibilities, then to back you - right or wrong. You do your job and I'll do mine".

I will try not to turn this into a "victory narrative" but it was the most intoxicatingly exciting time. I made many mistakes. In the early days I tried to do everything myself which nearly killed me. Whilst on sick leave I realised that I had to work with and through my line managers. After that we began to make real progress. In the mid 1980's, ten years before their time, we espoused Quality of Service, turning the control pyramid Δ into a support pyramid ∇, and creating openness at all levels within the organisation and with the community. There were many doubters and attempts to sabotage our efforts but we did make an impression.

My team of Inspectors took on responsibility for geographical areas, not just for eight hour shifts. They dealt direct with their local communities and were expected to solve problems not simply "satisfice" the system. Morale improved. Our strategic

plan - the first of its kind - secured additional resources on the basis of carefully calculated workloads. Our performance figures improved. Gradually, others noticed the changes and colleagues from other divisions discreetly visited to ask me what we were doing. Our reputation changed from "Fort Apache" to the most innovative and progressive sub-division in the force and I was invited to speak to command courses at Bramshill about our approach. My own learning curve during this period was well-nigh vertical.

I was also experimenting with allowing more of myself to appear at work. Several examples come to mind. I answered the phone with my name ("Geoff Mead, Good afternoon") rather than the customary bark ("Superintendent here"). This may not sound revolutionary but it was intended to break the old pattern and it really freaked some people out. In the spring and summer months I put fresh flowers on my desk and I both coined and espoused the aphorism "Ideas and feelings don't wear epaulettes". I was on a roll, committed to personal and professional transformation and I was prepared to put my career on the line to achieve them.

Looking back I see that period as the beginning of my awakening and of the continuing search for "the path with heart" (Castenada). I feel blessed to have experienced it and remember it with pride and joy. I believed that I had found both the lever and the fulcrum with which to move the world. Lack of grandiosity was not one of my faults. Today I am more modest in my aims and sadder for that, though living a healthier and more personally fulfilling life. At the very least, it was when I first consciously stepped outside conventional police culture, when I first explicitly rejected the mould into which I had fallen. It was a struggle for personal and organisational liberation and I know from comments I still receive from colleagues who shared that time that it was a period of tremendous learning and growth for many of them too.

In a sense of course, what I have just told is another "heroic myth". How deep this goes. What a delicious irony. Even in the manner of my rejection of the old hierarchical model of leadership I subtly reproduced it. I moved from one right way (authoritarian) to another right way (facilitative) - still an essentially male, positivist,

linear and instrumental world view. It would be years before this dialectic resolved to find a more open, creative and inclusive third position (authoritative) in which I both claim my own power and allow others theirs. In the words of Marianne Williamson (used by Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech as President of South Africa):

> Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.... And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

Doing what comes naturally

Because of my work at Watford and my continuing commitment to the mentoring role, I came to the notice of Des Ladd, Director of the Special Course - the national high-potential development programme for outstanding young police officers. He had a vision for the creation of a genuine learning community and asked me if I would be interested in succeeding him (the only time in my life that I have ever been "head hunted") and I jumped at the chance. It took us a year to manage the politics, to persuade both the head of higher police training and my chief constable, Trefor Morris. The latter (I notice that I am avoiding calling him Trefor) made it clear that, whilst he would support me, it was not a good career move - "too far out of the mainstream". I was adamant that this was what I wanted and he was as good as his word, promoting me to substantive chief superintendent at the age of thirty nine (one of the youngest in the country) and offering to take me back into Hertfordshire in my new rank if things did not work out.

So, I spent the next three and a quarter years (October 1988 - January 1992) at Bramshill as Director of the Special Course - which I later renamed the Accelerated Promotion Scheme - determined to influence the development of the future leadership of the police service for the better. I had come to believe that real leadership requires a commitment to something greater than one's own career. In the words of Antoine de St Exupery, "He who bears in his (sic) heart a cathedral to be built is already victorious. He who seeks to become sexton of a finished cathedral is already defeated. Victory is the fruit of love".

That distinction still encapsulates for me the crucial difference, the passion and surrender of self to something greater that leadership demands. My "cathedral in the heart" was the creation of a programme that would help the future leaders of the service develop their self-awareness, clarify their values and give them the skills to challenge the prevailing organisational culture effectively and appropriately.

After some months knocking my head against the brick wall of a Bramshill hierarchy that had no conception of personal development, a new arrival on the staff Commander John Townsend took me under his wing. "Do you always want to be seen to be right.. Or do you actually want to get things done?", he challenged me. When I replied that I wanted to make a difference he offered to teach me the art of organisational politics - how to lobby and build consensus, how to present arguments in language that others can understand, how to achieve my ends by addressing their concerns. I am still grateful to John for these valuable lessons.

Over the next two years, the course intake doubled in size and we attracted a highly skilled and committed staff group. Together, we firmly established a new style of working and created a space within the Bramshill environment which enabled participants to engage in what John Heron calls "manifold learning". I wrote about some aspects of the programme in *Management Education and Development (Vol 21 Part 5, Winter 1990 pp 406-414)* but in hindsight I believe that the most important facet was the creation of a climate in which we genuinely valued, nurtured and supported each other and rose daily to the challenge of breaking new ground in police training and development.

This period was my professional Camelot - a golden time when I was the right person in the right place at the right time. It was what I was born to do and I knew that the rest of my police career would be an anti-climax. All this at a time when my personal life was in turmoil. I had told my wife Sara about my affair and we were trying to face up to the difficulties and deficiencies in our relationship. After a period in joint marriage guidance counselling, I entered a process of individual gestalt therapy which was to last five years.

Maybe this conjunction is not so strange. In both professional and personal spheres I was slowly undergoing a metanoia, a profound radical shift in orientation from outer to inner directed. This continuing journey, begun ten years ago, has become a life-long commitment to live out, so far as I can, the values of authenticity and integrity. Like Bill Torbert, I walk purposefully but with a stumbling gait and there continue to be many misadventures and blind-alleys on the way.

Falling down

Despite six months notice and a well planned leave-taking, I wept when I left Bramshill. How could they take all this away from me? I was angry, too, that I had been forced to return to Hertfordshire six months before my family could join me and, in an attempt to prolong my stay at Bramshill, I had applied - against my better judgement - for the Senior Command Course (a requirement for promotion to chief officer ranks). All my instincts said "No, you do not want this. You do not want to trade your freedom for the illusion of power" but I allowed my head to rule my heart and I duly went off for the three day extended interview process ..... and failed spectacularly.

For nearly twenty years I had cleared every hurdle with ease, had acquired the reputation of someone who could be a chief constable if he wanted, and I found failure a bitter pill to swallow. Yet, now I can see that I could not expect to ignore my daimon with impunity. To protect me from myself it demanded that I underwent a time of ashes.

As I sat down for the first test I went completely blank. All I could think was "What on earth are you doing here?" I tried to push these doubts out of my mind and get on with it but I could not read the script. My eyes swam, my chest tightened and my breath shortened. I called for Apollo but Pan entered the room. After two hours of misery I handed in a blank paper. "I'm afraid I haven't written anything" I said to the invigilators, though what I meant was "I'm afraid. I haven't written anything".

Their immediate reaction was generous and humane. "The main thing now is you" said one of the selectors. He took me for a walk to calm down (I was crying) and asked me what I wanted to do. "You could leave now and start afresh next time , or you could go on". I knew that I would never come back and decided, for the sake of my own self-esteem, to stay and continue with the process. Knowing that I could not pass freed me from the possibility of getting what I did not want and I scored top marks in every other test. The feedback described me as .. "one of the most able and accomplished candidates" they had ever seen - which softened the blow a little.

I was forced to look anew at my place in the organisation. At a stroke, I had removed myself from the line of succession. I stopped feeling like one of "them" a long time before but now I could not even maintain the pretence. Suddenly I was "other", marginal and an object of pity and ridicule rather than curiosity and envy. At the time I tried to talk down the significance of what had occurred but actually the consequences were huge and - ultimately - beneficial. Unknowingly, I was at crossroads in my professional life. Had I not stumbled, I would probably have been a chief constable by now but I would have been walking on a famished road not a path with heart. I think of Robert Frost's wonderful poem *The Road Not Taken*

> I shall be telling this with a sigh
> Somewhere ages and ages hence:
> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
> I took the one less travelled by,
> And that has made all the difference.

Fighting back

I returned to Hertfordshire as Head of Management and Policy Supports (MAPS), a new department encompassing all of corporate services; Communications and IT, Press and Public Relations, Complaints and Discipline, Research and Monitoring, Quality Assurance, Corporate Planning and Executive Support. Also as a member of the Force Policy Group (FPG), the senior management team of the force - roughly

equivalent to a board of directors. Trefor Morris had gone on to join Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and had been replaced by Bill Skitt as Chief Constable.

The contrast with Bramshill could not have been sharper. If Bramshill had been my playground, joining FPG was like falling into a pit of velociraptors (a particularly savage breed of carnivorous dinosaur). Having become used to honest and open relationships with my colleagues at Bramshill, I got savaged in FPG when I expressed doubts or uncertainty ("an obvious sign of weakness"), or challenged the effectiveness of our group process ("don't come back here with your fancy ideas"). I could not believe that we were expected to put our hands up to speak in meetings and I told Bill Skitt that the last time I had to do that was in primary school and I didn't much like it then.

I had a running battle with one colleague who was responsible for appointing an Equal Opportunities Officer and implementing a new Equal Opportunities Policy - both of which he fundamentally opposed as a matter of principle. As Head of MAPS I had been tasked with arranging a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) for Equal Opportunities, work which I had combined with an embryonic plan to introduce Total Quality Management into the organisation. About a year into this process a letter arrived from HMIC querying our progress. It was routed to the chief constable via this colleague who endorsed it to the effect that nothing had happened because I had failed in my duty to complete the TNA.

This accusation was a clear attempt to torpedo me - I have rarely been so angry. I received a summons to see Bill Skitt, but before doing so I wrote a six page report detailing the work I had done to take these policies forward, concluding with a retaliatory depth charge "It may interest you to know how often the person who is responsible for implementing Equal Opportunities has spoken to me on this matter in the last year ..... NONE!"

Life at the top. Pretty picture isn't it? What a way for grown men to act - boys wrangling outside the headmaster's office. I hated it. Often I would sit in my office sunk in gloom. Once I sent for a computer printout of the age and length of service of

all the senior officers in the force to see how long I would have to survive to outlast them - too long for comfort. Since I was having no apparent effect by challenging the situation head on I decided on two long term courses of action.

First - organisation development by subversion. Under the guise of Total Quality Management we trained 40-50 facilitators and offered their services at meetings and conferences. They were used because they got results. Meetings made decisions. Problems got solved not shelved. But their real impact was subliminal. We had deliberately trained a wide cross section of the organisation; police and civilian, men and women, senior and junior. The effect was to cut across the prevailing culture, both hierarchy and patriarchy. A young woman traffic warden facilitating a group of male police superintendents changes the whole dynamic and begins to open up new possibilities.

Second - I wanted out. I did not like how I had to behave in order to survive and I needed some respite. Drawing on a contact I had made with a management consultant I introduced myself to Greg Parston the Chief Executive of the Office for Public Management (OPM), an independent consultancy and centre for the development of public sector management and persuaded him that it would be an excellent idea for me to come and work for them. Armed with his enthusiastic support I went to see Bill Skitt to negotiate a secondment. "They want me for a year", I said. "Quite impossible. I need you here". "What about six months?" "No, Can't be done". "Well", I insisted. "If I reapplied for the Senior Command Course I would be gone for six months anyway". "Mmmmmm" After a few minutes he warmed to the idea, even agreeing that he would persuade the Police Authority to pay my salary for the duration of my secondment.

Stepping out

By this time (May 1994) I had established strong connections with the world outside policing. From 1987 to 1991 I did a part time MBA at Henley Management College with 30-40 other experienced managers, which gave me an insight into their worlds as well as some of the tools and techniques that are commonplace in business. Much

more significantly, I had also been training for three years in gestalt and organisational consulting at metanioa, a West London institute for psychotherapy. Founded and run by two powerful women it was my first experience of an environment not dominated by men. Furthermore, all sexual orientations were welcomed and evident. As if that weren't enough there were black, asian and oriental faces among the trainees. It quite blew my mind. I was terrified at first and held on to my professional identity like a guilty secret. During one memorable workshop, one participant came out as a lesbian and I came out as a policeman. Swapping notes afterwards about our parallel outings, it was hard to tell which had been the most traumatic. Despite this rocky start, I came to love the people and the place where I spent hundreds of hours and thousands of pounds over a five year period.

The six months at OPM greatly increased my confidence. I worked as a jobbing consultant in a wide range of public sector organisations, charged out at £1,000 per day. I discovered that I could make the grade in the outside world. Better than that - I was good. Clients asked me back for repeat work and when the six months was up, I was offered a full time job if I wanted to stay there. I decided against staying for several reasons; financial (I would have had to defer my police pension for ten years), personal (I loved consulting but not the daily grind of commuting to London) and professional (I wanted to put what I had learned back into the police service). Greg accepted my decision graciously and appointed me a Visiting Fellow to OPM for the following three years.

A bonus of my time at OPM was meeting Ian Gee whose interest in men's development stimulated my own. I had already experienced a number of men's groups and events and we co-founded an eighteen month co-operative inquiry on the theme of men's development in organisations which has indirectly lead me to my own inquiry into masculinities in the police service.

Absent friends

Overnight, I have realised that I have not mentioned three important friendships with fellow (police)men. I am quite shocked by my omission and I want to put it right straight away.

As I climbed the ranks from Inspector to Superintendent, my progress was matched by two contemporaries, John Harris and Mick Barrett. We were of an age and potential rivals yet we became friends. Mick and I worked together at Hertford where we were known (affectionately, I like to think) as "the fat Chief Inspectors" - our enthusiastic, if unathletic, lunchtime runs being the subject of some amusement. Mick was streetwise and shrewd. John was a fellow graduate of the Special Course, local boy made good, hard driving and ambitious. I was the dreamer and innovator. We sometimes referred to ourselves as "The Three Musketeers" and made a point of supporting each other (one for all) and celebrating each others' successes (all for one).

Tragically, John died of a heart attack, aged forty one, whilst I was away at Bramshill. Mick followed him five years later, struck down by liver cancer. I went to both funerals - hundreds of uniformed police officers, men and women, some weeping openly, expressing their grief and affection for these two good men. So much for the stiff upper lip! I still think of them both fondly and, sometimes, when out running or when I am tempted to overwork, they remind me to look after myself. How strange that they are both gone and I remain.

I met my best friend Chris when he came to work for me at Bramshill. He is lively, intelligent, attractive and funny, his quick, bright, solar energy contrasting with my slower, deeper, lunar nature. When I returned to Hertfordshire, I missed him dreadfully and we made a pact to spend time together - evenings, odd days, weekends and several week-long holidays sailing in the Greek Islands. It has been the closest male relationship I have ever had, a kind of falling in love - like Rumi and Shams - a connection of heart, mind and soul. Even so, at some point we descended from the mountain top and, today, our friendship is more distant and prosaic. I don't know

quite how this happened and I feel saddened and puzzled by the loss of something precious.

These friendships have been great and unexpected gifts. That they have been possible in the police culture sustains my belief that it is possible for (police)men to be more fully themselves and to relate more authentically with each other.

Working on the edge

The combination of long term therapy, gestalt and consultancy training and exposure to the outside world has renewed and reinforced my determination to be a different kind of policeman. I can sometimes see myself as an organisational shaman, moving between these worlds at will and letting a little of each spill over into the other. These outside connections are also a vital source of support and nourishment for me in my work as an internal consultant, seeking to use the margin as a ground for radical action.

As my secondment at OPM was coming to an end I arranged a meeting with Peter Sharpe, the new Chief Constable of Hertfordshire and Greg Parston. We went for dinner at a fashionable London restaurant and I broached the subject of what I could do on my return to force. With Greg's encouragement Peter agreed that I would "work in circles around the boxes". That is, I would look at the organisation and management development needs of the force and recommend both what needed to be done and what role I could play in doing it.

In effect, I became a freelance internal consultant asking lots of awkward questions about the state of the organisation. After six weeks I presented my findings to Force Policy Group. The result was a small budget and a remit to design and implement management development programmes for middle and senior managers. The former (MDP) involved over one hundred police and civilian managers working together in learning sets supported by external facilitators and in-house mentors. The latter (SMDP) provided individual confidential executive coaching for more than forty senior police and civilian managers - up to, and including, the chief constable.

I shall resist the temptation to go into the details of each programme. The important thing to say is that I believe that both programmes challenged and shifted some of the cultural norms and assumptions of the organisations by such features as:

- police and civilian staff working together
- a fairly even balance of men and women
- taking responsibility for their own learning
- an atmosphere of mutual support and care
- integrating personal and professional development
- acknowledging that senior managers need help too

I think I made a useful contribution in other areas too, with work on Investors in People, stress management and strategy development. I was a bit isolated - generally working on my own - but enjoyed Peter Sharpe's confidence to the point where he occasionally used me as a confidante and sounding board.

I relished the position. The only fly in the ointment was my relationship with the Deputy Chief Constable, my immediate boss. Chalk and cheese: me soft-focused, holistic and "synthetic", him hard-edged, atomistic and intensely analytical. We struggled to find any common ground on which to communicate, coming at virtually every issue from opposite ends of the philosophical and intellectual spectrum. It was a constant battle of competing epistemologies.

Yet, on two occasions, he made a determined effort to bring me back into the fold. He realised that, following my time at OPM, my centre of gravity had shifted outside the police service. "You are like an egg", he said, "whose yolk lies outside the boundary of the organisation. It must be very uncomfortable". True. And painful. Whilst I continued to value my contact with police colleagues, I had emotionally detached myself from the police organisation of which I was a senior and long standing member.

"Love the people, hate the job" would be an exaggeration. I still believe that excellent policing is crucial to the quality of life we enjoy as democratic citizens. It is

just that my passion has shifted from helping society to helping those who help society. "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" - Who shall guard the guardians?- runs an old Latin tag. But I want to ask "Quis amabat ipsos custodes?" - Who shall love/ care for the guardians? Surely this is every bit as important? Unless we have compassion for each other (and I mean healthy, agapean, tough love not complacent, collusive, mutual self-regard) it becomes impossible to fully exercise our duty of care towards the public. The shortcomings and lack of awareness made evident by the Stephen Lawrence inquiry stem from a police culture deficient in the kind of compassion I want to promote. Remedying that deficiency will require new forms of leadership that transcend the tired old hegemonic masculine model that Amanda Sinclair describes so well in *Doing Leadership Differently*.

Leaving home

During the months at OPM and the succeeding years back in Hertfordshire, my interest in men and men's development deepened and, as I followed my own "path with heart", I embarked on the series of events that ultimately lead to the break-up of my marriage. How I was treated during that period has done much to restore my faith in the underlying benevolence of the police organisation - though I imagine it could be read differently, as (police)men closing ranks.

Early last year (1997) I told Peter Sharpe about my predicament and my overwhelming need to get away from home. He was immensely sympathetic and agreed that I could go to Bramsill for six months "on loan" (i.e. Hertfordshire would continue to pay my salary during that period). This made it possible for them to accept me as a temporary member of staff. I was allocated a beautiful two-bedroomed flat, which makes it easy for my children to come and stay, and given an undemanding job with flexible hours for six months. It was exactly what I needed to come through my personal ordeal and I am enormously grateful that colleagues were prepared to make such allowances. Without them I would undoubtedly have been off work for several months, unable to cope with the stress I was experiencing.

At the same time, I also encountered the shadow side of the organisation - precipitated it seems by my dramatic change of lifestyle. One day, several weeks after coming to Bramshill, I received a telephone call from Gary, an old friend and colleague back in Hertfordshire. After some hesitation and an embarrassed silence he finally told me that rumour and gossip about me were rife in the Constabulary. I responded with the telephonic equivalent of a shrug. After another long pause he continued ..... "I don't quite know how to tell you this Geoff ..... the story is that, after twenty five years, you have finally decided to come out of the closet as a homosexual".

I roared with laughter. "Pretty funny", I thought, given the way my life had actually been moving. Gary seemed shocked by my laughter. "What are you going to do about it?" he asked. "I think I'll enjoy the joke" I said. We left it at that and our talk turned to other matters. Afterwards, I reflected on this extraordinary occurrence. Apart from a gloriously ironic joke, what else was going on? Perhaps, at a systemic level, the organisation was seeking to marginalise and exclude me - for that would surely be the effect of being labelled gay. What an exquisite double-bind! I could not deny the allegation without compromising my values. I did not consider the accusation to be a slur. If I denied it, people could say "You see. You are not really liberal and open-minded, as you claim. You are just like us" If I did not deny it, they could say "You see. We told you so. This explains why he is so different." I decided to do nothing and let it ride.

It is often the fate of those who are different to be (r)ejected by the dominant group. Rosabeth Moss Kanter brilliantly fictionalises this phenomenon as the story of "O" in Men and Women of the Corporation. My own ambivalence about membership of the police organisation seems to be reflected in the paradox of being both included (cared for during my lowest ebb) and excluded (being labelled "gay" and therefore "other"). Fascinating.

Getting it together

In the interim I successfully applied for my present job, a three year contract as Senior Field Officer at Bramshill, working directly to Peter Hermitage, the Director of National Police Training (NPT) and I joined the CARPP programme at Bath. I am happy. I have come through the worst storms of my separation and have regained my energy and focus. Having spent the first year of CARPP concentrating on my own process, I am now looking outside - keen to make a significant contribution to the service in the four years I have left before retirement (or, better, change of career).

I want to embody the values of authenticity, integrity and compassion more explicitly in my practice; as an adviser and confidante of Peter Hermitage, as a manager, as a researcher, father, lover and friend. Am I asking too much of myself? No. I recognise that I often fall short of my aspiration and it is that "living contradiction" that fuels my determination to go on. I am seeking to bring together my passion for menswork, my frustration and my affection for the police service, my excitement at the possibilities of action research, my belief in the need for new forms of leadership development, and my influence at the heart of NPT at this uniquely ripe moment in the history of British policing to effect positive change.

Currently, my efforts are channelled through my relationship with Peter Hermitage (and the opportunity that presents to influence the national debate on police leadership) and my research programme *Policemen: Being and becoming men in the police service,* the importance of which has, at long last, been recognised by the award of a Bramshill Fellowship, and which I am beginning to move out into the public domain by holding one-to-one interviews ("conversations with cops") with the intention of organising some group activities in Hertfordshire in the Autumn.

If we achieve only a fraction of what needs to be done, I shall be able to leave the service, after thirty years, with a sense of satisfaction and completion. I know, from regular jogging, that it is important at this stage of the "race" to run with style, grace and pace. It is too soon to sprint for the line and I have come much too far to give up now.

The last lap

It feels very important, as I approach the end of my career, to bring these *Police Stories* up to date, to acknowledge that I am more at peace with the institution in which I have flourished professionally and yet from which I have so often felt alienated. I concluded the previous section in August 1998 and it is now December 2001, three years later and a mere six months before I leave the police force after thirty years' service.

During those three years I have remained on the staff of National Police Training, steadily expanding my role to encompass all aspects of Business and Performance Development for the organisation. I continued to support Peter Hermitage during his tenure as Director, then developed a similarly close relationship with his immediate successor. In recent months I have been co-opted onto the Senior Management Team and assumed responsibility for a wide range of projects in preparation for NPT's change of status to a Non-Departmental Public Body in April 2002. I have been exposed to an equally wide range of issues: Branding and Image, Intellectual Property Rights, Marketing, Media Management, and Business Planning. The work is important and brings a certain satisfaction in its achievement and in the opportunity to recruit and manage some very good people, but I have had to create other opportunities to satisfy my passion for developing my educational practice in a police context.

As described in *Chapter Five: Reshaping my Professional Identity,* I relinquished my plans to research masculinities in the police service in favour of a broader, more inclusive focus on the practice of police leadership. To this end, in 1999 I established and facilitated a fifteen-month long action inquiry group, *Developing Ourselves as Leaders,* with a dozen managers in the Hertfordshire Constabulary. I wanted to give something back to the organisation that had nurtured me and supported my development in so many ways. What better way could there be than to share what I was learning at CARPP about the potential of collaborative inquiry to empower people to take charge of their own learning? I was delighted when the claims made by group

members to have improved their leadership practice in particular ways were subsequently confirmed by an independent Home Office evaluation.

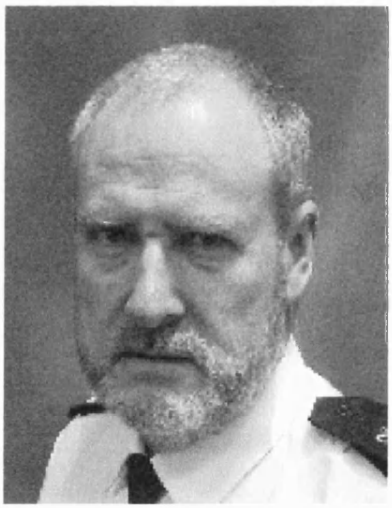
Building on this experience, I offered a short case study about our experience in the action inquiry group to the Cabinet Office as part of their research into public sector leadership. This clearly intrigued several members of the project's steering group who invited me, on behalf of NPT, to design an action inquiry programme for a new Public Sector Leaders Scheme to be offered each year to a hundred potential top leaders in the Civil Service, the National Health Service, Local Government, the Police, and Voluntary Organisations.

The scheme commenced in July 2001 and I now oversee and support a team facilitating eight parallel action inquiry groups with the promise of further similar-sized intakes in 2002 and 2003. Several groups have already taken up the challenge of addressing significant crosscutting service delivery problems. Although it is far too early to judge the impact of these groups on the quality of public sector leadership, I am optimistic that they will prove to be of some value in the long run. Over the next few months, I hope to involve other members of the CARPP community in developing and delivering the programme. Above all, I am very excited to have been instrumental in creating the opportunity for us to contribute at this level to such important national issues.

In the past three years I have also put a considerable amount of time and energy into researching and writing this PhD thesis. I have been fortunate to enjoy the financial support of a Bramshill Fellowship and time away from work to attend workshops and, in the latter stages, for writing up. Undertaking the CARPP programme has provided a vehicle to develop my educational practice and to reflect upon my life of inquiry. It has helped to maintain my motivation during the last five years of my police service when I could so easily have lost my sense of purpose. Despite my career-long concerns about the potential constraints of a uniformed and disciplined environment, there can be few employers who would in fact have so generously supported such challenging research – or such a renegade researcher!

Now that I am getting ready to leave my "second family" I am beginning to realise how much I will miss it. Rather like the last few hundred feet of a parachute jump, I am experiencing the ground-rush of my fast-approaching departure. I have seen so many colleagues leave, looking over their shoulders at what might have been and I determined many years ago that I would leave without regret, walking towards new challenges and opportunities. I am planning to take a few weeks holiday, go house hunting and, from September to December 2002, to complete a full-time residential storytelling course at Emerson College, Sussex. Later I hope to develop my practice as an organisational consultant and educator through the Public Service Leaders Scheme and elsewhere. I also want to go on writing and to base some of my work in an academic setting. Despite such clear plans, I am aware that the transition will not be easy and that I will need the support of my family, erstwhile colleagues and loving friends to move successfully into these new spaces.

There is always more to be said, but I want to close these reflections with two images. One of them is the first photograph taken of me in police uniform when I joined the Hertfordshire Constabulary as an earnest young graduate entrant. The other picture – of me as a rather tired looking Chief Superintendent – was taken a few days ago and will almost certainly be the last photograph of me in police uniform. They are separated in time by nearly thirty years of personal and professional experience – the alpha and omega of my police career. Save to say how different they both are from the joyful image of the storyteller in *Healing Journeys,* I will let them speak for themselves.



Appendix B

The Future for Men at Work[1]

Good afternoon. I looked at the programme again and I see that the title in there for this talk is *The Future for Men at Work* and I realise that is impossibly and enormously grandiose. The truth is I haven't got a clue what the future for men at work is...

In saying that, I want to honour the importance of what we're doing but not over-inflate the actuality of what we're doing. I think what we're doing is important and it's only a small piece of a lot of important work that has to be done. I'm here as a member of the [Men's Development in Organisations] inquiry group. I don't profess to speak for everyone. I think if I tried to do that I'd either bombard you with fragmentary thoughts or I'd reduce it to a really impoverished common denominator so I shall speak for myself. But, as Ian[2] said, I stand here in some sense on behalf of those men too.

Professionally I am, and have been for the last twenty-five years, a policeman. So I was amused and interested by Bea Campbell's description of the games of cops and robbers on housing estates and I can assure you it's even more exciting from the air... But we can't play cops and robbers forever... sadly. Part of me is sad. But part of me realises that's true... we can't. The cops can't play cops and robbers and the robbers can't play cops and robbers forever. We have to grow out of it. What that does mean is that I do have a particular background - and it's quite narrow. I don't want to use the word 'privileged' because it's not a privileged background. It's a particular background and it obviously colours the way I see things. In part it limits and in part it informs. I'm also the father of daughters and sons and I have been involved actively in men's work for about three or four years.

I don't know how you left here last night. I left here with my guts churning and feeling very disturbed. I'd actually got to the point where I was beyond words and

[1] Presentation to the *Men and Women: Working Together for a Change* conference – June 1996
[2] Ian Gee, a colleague from the Men's Development in Organisations inquiry group

beyond voice. I don't know if that was true for other men but my sense of the singing last night was that a number of us were beyond voice. The word that came to mind was *chastened.* I didn't actually know what it meant. I had to go and look it up. One meaning of the word, as I discovered from the dictionary, is 'being corrected by suffering'. I thought that's what I am - I feel chastened. I had a strong sense yesterday... in those two pools [of men and women]... of a lot of suffering, a lot of pain. So I didn't sleep much last night. But this morning I feel calmer. Something began for me in the afternoon in the workshop, which was the beginning of a sense of the sacredness of what we're doing. So I feel privileged to stand here and [feel] a considerable sense of responsibility too.

What I want to do is to share a few reflections with you on men's work and a few reflections on organisations that have come to my awareness during my time working with the inquiry group. Then... to speculate a little about how those two worlds might come together and perhaps leave you with a small poem, I hope.

The first thing above all [about men's work] is that, for me, it is about men healing men. That is not about healing sickness, it is about healing wounds. Wounds I take to be part of the human condition. We are all wounded. And the joy I have found in being able to turn to men for love, for comfort for nurturing and support has been immense. I realise the loss I have had in my life by not looking for that earlier. So that's one important thing to me about that... and it also offers up a possibility, because if I'm looking to men for what I can properly get from men then I'm not always looking to women for those things. I'm not looking to women, necessarily, in my personal life so much or in my professional life. I'm encouraged not to keep holding women in a caring role in a relationship to me. I think that has an enormous potential. I'm trying to make a connection [here] between what's important about men's work and healing of the genders.

Another thing for me, men's work has come to be about is... Yes it's about initiation into adulthood, but it's also about growing into elderhood. It's about becoming a mentor, it's about seeking to express generativity and share our blessings. I am [an older man] and I work with older men. There's part of me that still needs to become

initiated into becoming whatever a man is. There's part of me too that has to take on the responsibilities of being nearly fifty.

The third thing is about the transformation of relationships - the possibility it opens up for... transforming my relationships with men, with women and transforming my relationship to work, [so that it becomes] less obsessive, less central in my life, less the primary source of value and identity.

Organisations - well I've been heavily involved in one for twenty-five years and have worked in others. As other speakers have mentioned during these two days, they are becoming paradoxical places, they demand more and more of the person, more creativity, more flexibility and more effort. They seem to demand the whole person and yet I find them often sterile and punishing places to be. I am more demanding of what I want from my organisation. I am not prepared to tolerate that. I want life to be different. I'm not prepared to work out my time until retirement in conditions that I think are demeaning and diminish my soul. I want to do something about it. Mostly I want to do something about it where I am. I think one of the reasons this is important is because [organisations are] so much the locus for our economic, social and political activity. It's a very important domain for men and women to work out gender differences in.

So there are some thoughts about both men's work and organisations. Can they come together? Is it possible to bring these two things which, for me often seem like opposites, together? Well I have a sense of ripeness, of something happening or about to happen which is partly what drew me to co-create the [Men's Development in Organisations] inquiry group with Ian. But <u>what</u> is going to happen and <u>how</u>, is much difficult to answer. The image I have is... of two circles overlapping, of an almond-shaped common ground, which I learned from Robert Johnson[3] is an ancient symbol called a *mandorla*. He talks of it as something that has immense healing significance. "The *mandorla* begins the healing of the split. The overlap generally is very tiny at first, only a sliver of a new moon; but it is a beginning. As time passes,

[3] Johnson, R. A. (1991). <u>Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche</u>. San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco. P102

the greater the overlap, the greater and more complete is the healing. The *mandorla* binds together that which was torn apart and made unwhole – unholy."

So that's my image. What's the reality of that and what is my hope for that? My reality is that the two circles in my life touch - sometimes barely and sometimes they just overlap. In what practical ways... does that manifest itself? In truth, in small ways: in coming here, in bringing that part of me which is a policeman (and proud to say that) into this arena, in speaking out, in writing sometimes, in trying to have a small public voice. The other side of that is raising awareness of these issues in my own organisation, again in small ways: in conversation, in bringing [these kind of issues] into the organisation - with my colleagues, my peers and those I work for. It's true to say that I do it in a rather tentative and hesitant way and I'm quite often scared of ridicule, scared of loss of influence. But it's a beginning.

And doing small things differently. I think the best thing I've ever done is to take all the pictures of me on police courses out of my office. You know... "this is another educational experience I have had"... Throw those in the bin and cover the walls with pictures that I've painted. Without saying anything it has had a dramatic on people who come in there. It just lightens the tone and deepens the level of conversation, deepens the contact.

I think there are some practical things as well. Looking for opportunities within the work, in my workplace to bring people together. Introducing training and development programmes that bring together police and civilian staff, men and women, from many different levels of the organisation. Trying to create and build a culture of self-development and learning, supporting learning and building mentoring. These are things that are empowering and cut across the values of a traditional hierarchy or traditional patriarchy. They don't have the label of men's work or men's development on them and maybe they don't need to. Maybe we're not ready for that. But my hope is for this to grow.

My hope is that men at work and men in power at work will re-evaluate and re-examine, will question their own masculinity and the behaviours that go with it. As Bea (Mead, Campbell et al.) said in her opening address to us, the activities of those

youth involved in crime in some way merely parallels what those of us in positions of power and influence do. And if we're not prepared... to start with ourselves what can we ask for. I don't want to go out and save the world. That seems to me to be a typically male thing to do. I'd like to work with us. And let what may grow from that...

I think I need to be patiently impatient and stay where I am. That may be just an excuse because I'm too scared to go. But I think there's some value in me being where I am and trying to do what I do. It's a sliver of a new moon and I want to live there and try and nurture something into growth in the time I have left in this organisation.

I'd like to thank the members of the inquiry group for their support and encouragement, because courage is what I most often lack and what I most often need, and I'm very grateful to them for that.

And I'd like to close with a short poem if I can. This is a wonderful idea... I'm delighted there is some poetry here. This was a gift to me... I hadn't intended to read a poem but a woman friend at work heard that I was at the conference and sent me this note with the poem attached. She says: "I hope the conference is enjoyable and successful. I attach a poem by Ann Stevenson who I respect very much. I do hope the work you're all doing will help with unblocking our artificial barriers".

It's called *A Small Philosophical Poem*... by Ann Stevenson. I hope you like it...

> Doctor Animus, whose philosophy is a table
> sits down contentedly to a square meal.
> The plates lie there and there,
> just where they should lie.
> His feet stay just where they should stay,
> between legs and the floor.
> His eyes believe the clean waxed surfaces
> are what they are.

But while he's eating his un-
exceptional propositions, his wise
wife Anima, sweeping a haze gold decanter
from a metaphysical salver,
pours him a small glass of doubt.
Just what he needs.
He smacks his lips and cracks his knuckles.
The world is the pleasure of thought.

He'd like to stay awake all night
(elbows on the table)
talking of how the table might not be there.
But Anima, whose philosophy is hunger,
perceives the plates are void in empty air.
The floor is void beneath his trusting feet.
Peeling her glass from it's slender cone of fire
she fills the room with love. And fear. And fear.

I read it to Ian the other day and he agreed with me that... it says something important about both the difference and the coming together of genders, between us and within us. And it honours the feelings I have about this work. Thank you.

Appendix C

The Story of Jumping Mouse[1]

There was once a mouse. He was a busy mouse, searching everywhere, touching his whiskers to the grass, and looking. He was busy as all mice are, busy with mice things. But once in a while he would hear an odd sound. He would prick his ears and lift his head, squinting hard to see, his whiskers wiggling in the air, and he would wonder.

One day he scurried up to a fellow mouse and asked him, "Do you hear a roaring in your ears, my brother?" "No, no", answered the other mouse, not lifting his busy nose from the ground. "I hear nothing. I am busy now. Talk to me later." He asked another mouse the same question and the mouse looked at him strangely. "Are you foolish in the head? What sound?" he asked and slipped into a hole in a fallen cottonwood tree.

The little mouse shrugged his whiskers and busied himself, determined to forget the whole matter. But there was that roaring again. It was faint, very faint, but it was there! He decided to investigate the sound just a little. Leaving the other busy mice, he scurried a little way away and listened again. There it was! He was listening hard when suddenly, someone said "Hello."

"Hello, little brother," the voice said, and Mouse almost jumped right out of his skin. He arched his back and tail and was about to run. "Hello," again said the voice. "It is I, Brother Racoon." And sure enough, it was! "What are you doing here all by yourself, little brother?" Asked the racoon.

The mouse blushed, and put his nose almost to the ground. "I hear a roaring in my ears and I am investigating it," he answered timidly.

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[1] This story has been shared with non-Native American cultures by Hyemeyohsts Storm in his classic book of the Plains Indian People, *Seven Arrows* Storm, H. (1972). Seven Arrows. New York, Ballantine Books.

"A roaring in your ears?" replied the racoon as he sat down with him. "What you hear, little brother, is the river."

"The river?" Mouse asked curiously. "What is a river?"

"Walk with me and I will show you the river," Racoon said.

Little Mouse was terribly afraid, but he was determined to find out once and for all about the roaring. "I can return to my work," he thought, "after his thing is settled, and possibly this thing may aid me in all my busy examining and collecting. And my brothers all said it was nothing. I will show them. I will ask Racoon to return with me and I will have proof." "All right Racoon, my brother," said Mouse. "Lead on to the river. I will walk with you."

Little Mouse walked with Racoon, his heart pounding in his breast. The racoon was taking him upon strange paths and Little Mouse smelled the scent of many things that had gone by this way. Many times he became so frightened he almost turned back. Finally, they came to the river!

It was huge and breathtaking, deep and clear in places, and murky in others. Little Mouse was unable to see across it because it was so great. It roared, sang, cried, and thundered on its course. Little Mouse saw great and small pieces of the world carried along on its surface. "It is powerful!" Little Mouse said, fumbling for words.

"It is a great thing," answered the racoon, "but here, let me introduce you to a friend." In a smoother, shallower place was a lily pad, bright and green. Sitting upon it was a frog, almost as green as the pad it sat on. The frog's white belly stood out clearly.

"Hello, little brother," said the frog. "Welcome to the river."

"I must leave you," cut in Racoon. "But do not fear, little brother, for Frog will care for you now." And Racoon left, looking along the riverbank for food that he might wash and eat.

Little Mouse approached the water and looked into it. He saw a frightened mouse reflected there. "Who are you?" Little Mouse asked the reflection. He looked up at Frog. "Are you not afraid being so far out into the Great River?"

"No," answered the frog, "I am not afraid. I have been given the gift from birth to live both above and within the river. When Winter comes and freezes this Medicine, I cannot be seen. But all the while Thunderbird flies, I am here. To visit me, one must come when the world is green. I, my brother, am the keeper of the water."

"Amazing!" Little Mouse said at last, again fumbling for words.

"Would you like to have some Medicine Power?" Frog asked.

"Medicine Power? Me?" asked Little Mouse. "Yes, yes! If it is possible."

"Then crouch as low as you can, and then jump as high as you are able! You will have your Medicine!" Frog said.

Little Mouse did as he was instructed. He crouched as low as he could and jumped. And when he did he saw, far off, the Sacred Mountains. Little Mouse could hardly believe his eyes. But there they were! Then he fell back to earth and landed in the river! Little Mouse scrambled back to the bank. He was wet and frightened nearly to death. "You tricked me," Little Mouse screamed at the frog!

"Wait," said the frog. "You are not harmed. Do not let your fear and anger blind you. What did you see?"

"I," Mouse stammered, "I, I saw the Sacred Mountains!"

"And you have a new name!" Frog said. "It is Jumping Mouse."

"Thank you. Thank you," Jumping Mouse said, and thanked him again. "I want to return to my people and tell them of this thing that has happened to me."

"Go. Go then," Frog said. "Return to your people. It is easy to find them. Keep the sound of the Great River to the back of your head. Go opposite to the sound and you will find your brother mice."

Jumping Mouse returned to the world of the mice. But he found disappointment. No one would listen to him. And because he was wet, and had no way of explaining it because there had been no rain, many of the other mice were afraid of him. They believed he had been spat from the mouth of another animal that had tried to eat him. And they all knew that if he had not been food for the one who wanted him, then he must also be poison for them.

Jumping Mouse lived again among his people, but he could not forget his vision of the Sacred Mountains. The memory burned in the mind and heart of Jumping Mouse, and one day he went to the edge of the place of mice and looked out into the prairie. He looked up for eagles. The sky was full of many spots, each one an eagle. But he was determined to go to the Sacred Mountains. He gathered all of his courage and ran just as fast as he could onto the prairie. His little heart pounded with excitement and fear.

He ran until he came to some sage bushes. He was resting and trying to catch his breath when he saw an old mouse. The patch of sage Old Mouse lived in was a haven for mice. Seeds were plentiful and there was nesting material and many things to be busy with.

"Hello," said Old Mouse. "Welcome."

Jumping Mouse was amazed: such a place and such a mouse. "You are truly a great mouse," Jumping Mouse said with all the respect he could find. "This is truly a wonderful place. And the eagles cannot see you here, either."

"Yes, " said Old Mouse," and one can see all the beings of the prairie here: the buffalo, antelope, rabbit and coyote. One can see them all from here and know their names."

"That is marvellous," Jumping Mouse said. "Can you also see the Great River and the Sacred Mountains?"

"Yes and no," Old Mouse said with conviction. "I know there is a river. But I am afraid that the Sacred Mountains are only a dream. Forget your passion to see them and stay here with me. There is everything you want here, and it is a good place to be."

"How can he say such a thing?" thought Jumping Mouse. "The Medicine of the Sacred Mountains is nothing one can forget." "Thank you very much for the meal you have shared with me, Old Mouse, and also for sharing your home," Jumping Mouse said. "But I must seek the mountains."

"You are a foolish mouse to leave here. There is danger on the prairie! Just look up there!" Old Mouse said, with even more conviction. "See all those spots! They are eagles, and they will catch you!"

It was hard for Jumping Mouse to leave, but he gathered his determination and ran hard again. The ground was rough, but he arched his tail and ran with all his might. He could feel the shadows of the spots upon his back as he ran. All those spots! Finally he ran into a stand of chokecherry trees. Jumping Mouse could hardly believe his eyes. It was cool there and very spacious. There was water, cherries and seeds to eat, grasses to gather for nests, holes to be explored and many, many other busy things to do.

He was investigating his new domain when he heard very heavy breathing. He quickly investigated the sound and discovered its source. It was a great mound of hair with black horns. It was a great buffalo. Jumping Mouse could hardly believe the greatness of the being he saw lying there before him. He was so large that Jumping Mouse could have crawled into one of his great horns. "Such a magnificent being," thought Jumping Mouse, and he crept closer.

"Hello, my brother," said Buffalo. "Thank you for visiting me."

"Hello, great being," said Jumping Mouse. "Why are you lying here?"

"I am sick and I am dying," Buffalo said, "and my Medicine has told me that only the eye of a mouse can heal me. But little brother, there is no such thing as a mouse."

Jumping Mouse was shocked. "One of my eyes!" he thought. "One of my tiny eyes." He scurried back into the stand of chokecherries. But the breathing came harder and slower. "He will die," thought Jumping Mouse, "if I do not give him my eye. He is too great a being to let die." He went back to where Buffalo lay and spoke. "I am a mouse," he said with a shaky voice. "And you, my brother, are a great being. I cannot let you die. I have two eyes, so you may have one of them."

The minute he had said it, Jumping Mouse's eye flew out of his head and Buffalo was made whole. He got to his feet, shaking Jumping Mouse's whole world. "Thank you, my little brother," said Buffalo. "I know of your quest for the Sacred Mountains and of your visit to the Great River. You have given me life so that I may give-away to the people. I will be your brother forever. Run under my belly and I will take you right to the foot of the Sacred Mountains, and you need not fear the spots. The eagles cannot see you while you run under me. All they will see will be the back of a buffalo. But I cannot go further. I am of the prairie and I will fall on you if I try to go up the mountains."

Jumping Mouse ran under Buffalo, secure and hidden from the spots, but with only one eye it was frightening. Buffalo's great hooves shook the whole world each time he took a step. Finally they came to a place and Buffalo stopped. "This is where I must leave you, little brother," he said.

"Thank you very much," said Jumping Mouse. "But you know, it was very frightening running under you with only one eye. I was constantly in fear of your great earth-shaking hooves."

"Your fear was for nothing," said Buffalo, "for my way of walking is the Sun Dance way, and I always know where my hooves will fall. Now I must return to the prairie, my brother. You can always find me there."

Jumping Mouse immediately began to investigate his new surroundings. There were even more things here than in other places, busier things, and an abundance of seeds and other things mice like. In his investigation of these things, suddenly he ran upon a grey wolf who was sitting there doing absolutely nothing. "Hello brother wolf," Jumping Mouse said.

The wolf's ears came alert and his eyes shone. "Wolf! Wolf! Yes, that is what I am, I am a wolf!" But then his mind dimmed and it was not long before he sat quietly again, completely without memory as to who he was. Each time Jumping Mouse reminded him who he was, he became excited with the news, but soon would forget.

"Such a great being," thought Jumping Mouse, "but he has no memory." Jumping Mouse went to the centre of this new place and was quiet. He listened for a very long time to the beating of his heart. Then suddenly he made up his mind. He scurried back to where the wolf sat and he spoke.

"Brother Wolf," Jumping Mouse said. . . .

"Wolf! Wolf," said the wolf. . .

"Please, Brother Wolf," said Jumping Mouse, "please listen to me. I know what will heal you. It is one of my eyes and I want to give it to you. Please take it." When Jumping Mouse stopped speaking his eye flew out of his head and Wolf was made whole. Tears fell down Wolf's cheek, but his little brother could not see them, for now he was blind.

"You are a great brother," said Wolf. "Now I have my memory. I am the guide to the Sacred Mountains. I will take you there. There is a great Medicine Lake there: the most beautiful lake in the world. The whole world is reflected there: the people, the lodges of the people, and all the beings of the prairies and skies."

"Please take me there," Jumping Mouse said. Wolf guided him through the pines to the Medicine Lake. Jumping Mouse drank the water from the lake and Wolf described the beauty to him.

"I must leave you here," said Wolf, "for I must return so that I may guide others, but I will remain for as long as you like."

"Thank you, my brother," said Jumping Mouse. "But although I am frightened to be alone, I know you must go so that you may show others the way to this place."

Wolf left and Jumping Mouse sat, trembling in fear. It was no use running, for he was blind, and he knew an eagle would find him there. He felt a shadow on his back and heard the sound that eagles make. He braced himself for the shock.

The eagle hit!

Jumping Mouse went to sleep.

Then he woke up. The surprise of being alive was great, for now he could see! Everything was blurry, but the colours were beautiful.

"I can see! I can see!" said Jumping Mouse over and over again.

A faint shape came toward Jumping Mouse. He squinted hard but the shape remained a blur.

"Hello, brother," a voice said. "Do you want some Medicine?"

"Some Medicine for me?" asked Jumping Mouse. "Yes! Yes!"

"Then crouch down as low as you can," the voice said, "and jump as high as you can."

Jumping Mouse did as he was instructed. He crouched as low as he could and jumped! The wind caught him and carried him higher.

"Do not be afraid," the voice called to him. "Hang on to the wind and trust!"

Jumping Mouse did. He closed his eyes and hung on to the wind and it carried him

higher and higher. He opened his eyes and they were clear, and the higher he went the clearer they became. Jumping Mouse looked down and saw his old friend upon a lily pad on the beautiful Medicine Lake.

"Is that you, Frog?" he called.

"Hello Jumping Mouse," cried Frog. "You have a new name. You are Eagle now. Look... look at yourself."

Jumping Mouse looked. Where his hindlegs had been were sharp talons, where his forelegs had been were wing feathers, and where his nose and whiskers had been was a great curved beak.

He spread his wings wide... and he flew... and he flew... and he flew.


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